Hot Stuff

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/73593376.

Rating:
Explicit

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
M/M

Fandom:
Boots (TV)

Relationship:
Nash/Slovacek (Boots TV)

Characters:
Nash (Boots TV), Slovacek (Boots TV)

Additional Tags:
Fluff and Smut, Road Trips, Forced Proximity, There Was Only One Bed, bickering as foreplay, Internalized Homophobia, Disco Appreciation, Nash Yearns, like a lot, Dry Humping, Coming In Pants, sweater vests, Intercrural Sex, Showering Together, Anal Fingering, Laundry

Language:
English

Series:
Part 2 of caramel

Stats:
Published: 2025-11-03 Updated: 2025-12-18 Words: 36,522 Chapters: 6/8

Hot Stuff

by amandarin_orange21

Summary

Desperate for more alone time with Slovacek after their night together, Isaiah invites him on a road trip.

Notes

oh my god to everyone who liked and commented on mr big dick THANK YOU SO MUCH i have never gotten so much love on a fic in my life you guys are so kind!!!!!!! thank god you all have taste and want these two to be together as badly as i do
as of right now i have this set to be a five part series and each part will have however many chapters tickles my fancy

this part takes place immediately following mr big dick and will follow them through their leave period :-)

Chapter 1: Truckin

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nash

Isaiah knows he shouldn't be surprised when he wakes up and finds the other half of the bed empty, but he is. He can't help it. The whole night felt so surreal. There's evidence everywhere, though. The hotel room is steeped in it. Rumpled sheets, a man-sized divot in the mattress, pillows beaten and rearranged into a nest. A pair of damp, soiled washcloths, a half-drunk water bottle on each night stand.

Someone *was* here. But now he's gone.

And now Isaiah's cold, and the room is too quiet, and his skin is unmarked in a way that makes his stomach feel like it's full of lead. Not a single scratch or mottled bruise to remember it by. Housekeeping will come and everything will be washed away. He rolls over to the other side of the bed with a sigh and buries his face in the pillow. He inhales deeply. It still smells like cigarettes and the kind of cologne that comes in a can. It shouldn't smell as good as it does, and it probably wouldn't if it was left there by anyone else.

Isaiah honestly, *truly* did not expect to hook up with Slovacek, but that's not to say that he didn't think about hooking up with Slovacek until last night. He *definitely* did. Frequently and in gory detail. But, to be fair, there are few people from boot camp that Isaiah *didn't* think about fucking at some point. There wasn't exactly much else for him to do in the little free time he had, especially after he went and put his foot in his mouth with the whole notebook incident. Pretty much everyone avoided him like the plague after that.

Not Slovacek, though. He didn't change his behavior towards Nash after he heard the things he wrote about him. It's not like his behavior was particularly good before the incident, but, well. At least he's consistent.

Maybe that's what kicked this whole thing off. It *is* pretty hot that he can handle Isaiah's bitchy streak. Or maybe it was when Slovacek and Santos fought while they were on mess duty and Isaiah had to (he *had*

to, he swears) squeeze himself between them, all angry and sweaty and covered in food. Or maybe it was that first group shower, watching Slovacek strut around, broad-chested and hairy and completely unashamed. Or maybe-

Ok. *Maybe* Isaiah has been into him since he first laid eyes on him. It doesn't matter. It shouldn't matter.

But. Well, last night happened, so maybe it does matter a little bit. God, he's such a dumbass.

Isaiah takes a scorching hot shower and tries to scrub Slovacek from his mind. He goes on a long, miserable run until his heels are rubbed raw and his shirt is drenched in sweat. Takes another shower when he gets back, freezing cold this time. He paces around his hotel room. Packs his things. Unpacks, refolds them all, then packs again.

After it all, he's still thinking about Slovacek.

They only have a little over a week before they go their separate ways, Isaiah returning to Howard and Slovacek moving on to Camp Lejeune. It's bittersweet. As glad as Isaiah is to be done with boot camp, he knows he'll miss his boys. Embarrassingly, he knows he'll miss Slovacek the most out of all of them.

Their fling the night before was great. Better than great, really. It was the best hook up Isaiah's ever had. But it wasn't enough. Isaiah wants — he *needs* more. He needs Slovacek all to himself, uninterrupted, no excuses for either of them to run away. How the fuck does he manage that?

Then it hits him. Trap Slovacek in a car with him for an extended period of time. *Genius*.

Isaiah gathers his things and makes his way down to the hotel lobby. As he checks out, he asks the man at the front desk where the nearest AAA is. He heads over there, gets one of those TripTik books for somewhere far-ish, but not *too* far, and heads across town to the shitty motel he knows Slovacek is staying at.

"Please, miss," Isaiah says, putting on his most pathetic pout. He's in the check-in lobby, lying through his teeth to the girl at the desk in the hopes that she'll pity him and give up sensitive information about a guest. He holds the cap of his dress blues to his chest, right over his heart. The desk girl snaps her gum. She hasn't even looked up from the computer screen. He wishes she would because his manipulation

tactics work *way* better when his target looks him in his big brown eyes. They're foolproof.

"I really, *really* need to get this back to him before he leaves. We're marines and this is part of our uniform. I just can't remember which room he's staying in. His name is… Uh. Well, his last name is Slovacek. He's about my height. Scary looking white kid. I know it's probably against your code of ethics-"

"He's in room 8," she says dully, finally looking up from the computer, only to observe her nails instead.

Isaiah blinks. "Oh. Um. Thank you so much," he says, giving her a polite smile.

"Whatever," she mumbles as he turns on his heel and practically sprints to room 8. But then he's outside the door, and he's realizing how insane this is. What the hell is he thinking? What even is his plan? Why the hell is he doing this? He should go. This is so dumb-

Isaiah doesn't have time to move before the door swings open and reveals Slovacek, jaw clenched and eyes narrowed, wearing only a pair of clingy gray sweatpants that sit low on his hips. Isaiah gapes at him. God, he looks so hot.

And on second thought, maybe his idea isn't *that* dumb.

"What?" Slovacek asks, leaning against the doorway casually, and it's actually not Isaiah's fault that he can't tear his eyes away from the dark hair trailing down from his belly button, disappearing below his waistband. Slovacek *definitely* doesn't have underwear on.

"Uh…"

Slovacek huffs impatiently, and Isaiah forces himself to make eye contact, but now he's pinned under his harsh glare. It doesn't help at all. Not a single coherent thought passes through his pathetic brain.

"Are you here for your cash? I don't have it anymore. I needed it for a cab-"

"Did you steal from me?" Isaiah frowns, suddenly cognizant once again. He pulls out his wallet. Sure enough, when he peeks inside, he's missing a ten dollar bill. "You dirty thief!"

"I didn't steal anything," Slovacek says, holding his hands up

innocently. Then he widens his stance and shoves his hands in his pockets, pulling his pants down even further. They're low enough now that it's borderline obscene. He must know exactly what he's doing, the distracting motherfucker. Isaiah sighs impatiently and scrubs a hand over his face. "I was joking. Honestly, it's pretty fuckin' rude that you believed me. You probably just lost your money. Got so much you can't keep track of it."

"Yeah, right," Isaiah grumbles. His gaze darts back to Slovacek's exposed stomach, down further to the prominent bulge in his sweatpants, then slowly sweeps back up. Whatever. He can keep the ten bucks. "What's your name, by the way?"

Slovacek wrinkles his nose at him. "The fuck? Are you concussed or something?" he asks, then his face falls. "Shit. Is that why you… last night…?"

Wait, is he *actually* worried that Isaiah only hooked up with him because he has a brain injury? Does he not know what he looks like?

"No," Isaiah assures him quickly "Not concussed. Brain's working just fine." He gives a wry smile, because is it really? "I just… When I was asking the front desk girl for your room number, I realized I don't actually know your first name."

"Oh. Well, it's Nick, but don't fucking call me that," Slovacek grumbles, and he twists his mouth into an uncomfortable frown.

Isaiah nods. "I won't," he assures him, and the frown untangles into his usual intimidating glower. "Mine's Isaiah, if you were wondering. You can call me that. If you want."

"Cool. Why are you here?" Slovacek asks, raising a brow at him impatiently.

Isaiah bristles. Slovacek wasn't like this last night. He was sarcastic and kind of difficult, but that's just how he is. He hasn't really been this cold with Isaiah for a few weeks now. What's with the sudden switch up?

"I came by to see if you wanted to… I dunno, *do* something, but if you're gonna be like that, never mind."

Slovacek is silent for a moment, watching Isaiah skeptically. "Like what?"

Isaiah shrugs casually, but his heart is in his stomach. "Can I come in?"

Slovacek rolls his eyes and steps aside, dramatically gesturing for Isaiah to come into his room, which he does. The door falls shut behind him and Slovacek leans against it, big arms folded across his chest, one ankle kicked over the other. He looks annoyed, which is, unfortunately for Isaiah, a turn on. Isaiah shuffles further into the room awkwardly and perches himself on the very edge of Slovacek's unmade bed. He wrings his hands together as he eyes the very small pile of dirty clothes in the corner, an empty duffel next to it.

He must look pretty pathetic sitting there, because Slovacek's expression thaws just slightly. Isaiah fiddles with the hat in his hands, then steels himself with a deep breath. "How are you getting to Lejeune?"

"A bus, I guess. Cope said there's one that can take us from here," Slovacek says.

"Do you wanna ride with me?"

Slovacek furrows his brow. "What, like save you a seat on the bus?"

"No, my parents drove my car down for me," Isaiah says. "Thought I might make a trip out of it, but… I dunno. I don't think it'd be that fun by myself."

"And you wanna take me." Slovacek is staring at him like he's grown a second head.

"Yeah, why not?"

"Why *me?"*

"Who else? Santos is with his family and Cope doesn't go anywhere without McAffey. I'd rather not third wheel with those two," Isaiah says, and while he pulled it out of his ass, it's not untrue. Santos *is* with his family, and Cope and McAffey are way closer with each other than they are with Isaiah. He would probably feel weird.

Slovacek narrows his eyes at him skeptically. "Say I agree to this road trip. Where are we going?"

"I hear Nashville's fun," Isaiah says casually, pulling at a loose string on the quilt beneath him.

"Nashville?" Slovacek asks in disbelief. "Isn't that far?"

"It's, like, an eight hour drive." Not something he wants to do alone. He probably won't do it at all if he has to go alone, but he *really* wants to go, and he *really really* wants to go with Slovacek. But he can't sound too eager. It's Slovacek, after all. "It's doable if we drive in shifts."

Slovacek looks absolutely bewildered now. "You trust me to drive your car?"

"Fuck no, but I'd rather take the risk than do the whole drive on my own," Isaiah says. "Listen, if you'd rather stay in this sketchy motel room with your hand down your pants, that's your prerogative. You probably don't even know how to drive stick anyway…" He eyes Slovacek, hoping he'll bite.

Slovacek scoffs dramatically. *Yes*. "Of *course* I can drive stick, I'm not a bitch. Fuck it. Let's go to Nashville."

Isaiah suppresses a triumphant grin. He can't believe that actually worked. And it was so easy! Maybe he's not as alone in his desperation as he thinks. "Alright. Pack your shit, then. I wanna get on the road soon."

Isaiah takes Slovacek's spot against the door and watches as he grabs a tank top from the pile and gives it a sniff. Apparently, he deems it acceptable, as he tugs it on and stuffs the rest of the pile into his duffel. Then he disappears into the bathroom, reappearing a moment later with an armful of toiletries. He dumps them, wet toothbrush and all, into the bag.

Isaiah wrinkles his nose. "You pack like a toddler."

"You an expert on packing or something? Wanna do it for me?" Slovacek asks, raising a challenging brow.

"Absolutely not," he says. He watches Slovacek zip up the bag and sling it over his shoulder, then pull on his shoes. Big, heavy work boots that he doesn't bother tying.

"Ready."

"Seriously? That's what you're wearing out?" Isaiah gapes at him. He expected him to maybe throw on a sweatshirt or at *least* some underwear, but no. Slovacek wants to torture him. And it's not even

just the sweatpants. The tank top is little more than an undershirt—the paper thin kind that comes in a five pack, and it's stretched even thinner across his broad chest. A silver chain bearing a cross hangs from his neck, and Isaiah wants to feel it between his fingers, tug on it, see it swinging over him. *Jesus Christ.* Get it together, Isaiah.

"What? What's wrong with it?" Slovacek asks, looking down at himself. "No stains or holes. Doesn't smell that bad. It's fine."

Isaiah huffs. "I just- I can see *everything*," he says, feeling his cheeks heat.

Slovacek barks a loud, surprised laugh. "What, are you a prude all the sudden? We've seen each other ass naked a thousand times and you can't handle a wife beater?"

"It's not the shirt, it's the pants," Isaiah says. "Put some boxers on. I'm not going out in public with you like that."

Slovacek smirks. Only a fraction as smug as he was the night before, but it's enough to send Isaiah's stomach reeling. "Why? Is it making insecure?"

"I'm plenty secure," Isaiah says through gritted teeth, and Slovacek's smirk widens. *There he is.* "More than secure by most people's accounts."

"But I'm the secure-est," Slovacek teases, and God help Isaiah. He sucks his teeth, then takes a deep breath.

"That doesn't even make any sense."

"You get what I'm saying," Slovacek says, and the look he's giving Isaiah is dangerous. Eyes dark and playful, lips ticked up in one corner. "Come on, admit it."

"Didn't I last night?"

Slovacek shrugs. "Say it again."

Isaiah stares at him for a moment, heart pounding. As the silence between them stretches, Slovacek grows smug. He doesn't think Isaiah will do it.

Isaiah pushes off the door and steps closer. He looks at Slovacek through his lashes, cocks his head to the side, and says, voice low,

"You're so fucking huge, Slovacek. Is that what you wanna hear?"

Apparently yes, because Slovacek flushes from the tips of his ears to his exposed collarbone. For someone who talks a big game, he gets flustered *very* easily, and damn, does Isaiah love calling his bluff.

Slovacek tugs on the cross hanging from his neck. "Uh-"

Isaiah gives him a pat on his shoulder. "Put on some boxers, big boy. You look like a porn star."

Slovacek exhales sharply and shakes his head. "Fine," he says, his voice weak, then he clears his throat. He shrugs the duffel bag from his shoulder and shoves at Isaiah. Isaiah takes it and holds it while Slovacek digs through to find a pair of underwear. Then, right in front of him, Slovacek kicks off his boots and pulls off his pants without breaking eye contact.

Isaiah clutches the bag tightly to his chest. He stares very deliberately into Slovacek's eyes while he steps into his boxers, then his pants, then his boots. It takes everything in Isaiah to maintain eye contact, but against all odds, he manages. When Slovacek straightens again, he shoots Isaiah a wink.

Well. He probably deserves that.

"I already regret inviting you," Isaiah says, thrusting the bag back into Slovacek's arms.

"Too late to back out now. I'm already packed and ready to go." When Slovacek gives him a lopsided grin, Isaiah realizes he may have gotten himself in *way* over his head.

"You know how to read a map, right?" Isaiah asks as he reaches across the center console to dig through his glove box. He pulls out the booklet he got from AAA and tosses it into Slovacek's lap.

Slovacek has already made himself right at home in the passenger side

of Isaiah's red Cherokee, kicking off his shoes and reclining his seat.

"Obviously I know how to read a map," Slovacek scoffs. He picks up the booklet and thumbs through it idly. "Do you have any music?"

"There's a thing of CDs in the back pocket of your seat," Isaiah says, watching as Slovacek stretches around to grab it. His shirt rides up, exposing the pale skin of his lower back, dimples on display just above his waistband. Isaiah swallows hard and turns his attention to the steering wheel as Slovacek drops back into his seat, a big blue binder in his lap. He flips through lazily.

"Diana Ross, Chaka Khan, Whitney Houston, Donna Summer…" Slovacek looks up at him, a brow quirked. "This is the gayest fucking CD collection I've ever seen."

Isaiah rolls his eyes. "Fuck off. Most of those are my mom's." They are not. Isaiah likes disco. Sue him. "She— you know what? It doesn't matter. I know you don't believe me anyway. Just put on Donna Summer."

"Fine, but I wanna make it clear that I was gonna choose Donna Summer anyway. I'm not putting it on because you told me to," Slovacek says petulantly. He pulls out the CD and pushes it into the player, then puts the binder on the floor and his feet up on the dash.

"No," Isaiah says firmly. He shoves Slovacek's knee, making his feet fall.

"Oh my god, we haven't even left yet and you're already worse than my fuckin' mother," Slovacek complains. "I can't get comfortable?"

"Not like that, you can't," Isaiah says, and he starts driving. Hot Stuff starts to play through his car speakers, and he has to stop himself from bopping around to the beat. He needs to focus. "Keep your filthy feet off Jessica."

"Ok, a couple of things— A, my feet are clean as a whistle. I'd lick the bottoms of them if I could reach," Slovacek says, and Isaiah wrinkles his nose at the visual. "And two, who the fuck is Jessica?"

"My car," Isaiah says as though it's obvious. Honestly, it *should* be obvious. "Jessica the Jeep. Cause she's red like Jessica Rabbit."

"You named your car after the cartoon rabbit lady?"

"She's not a rabbit, she's just married to one," Isaiah huffs. "She's hot."

"The *cartoon* is hot?"

"Yeah, she's hot. She's *supposed* to be hot," Isaiah says impatiently, white knuckling the steering wheel. This cannot be good for his blood pressure. "Stop acting like you don't get it."

"I'm not acting," Slovacek says, and from the corner of his eye, Isaiah can see him smirking.

"Whatever. I'm not arguing with you about whether or not Jessica Rabbit is hot," Isaiah says.

"You *just* were-"

"Shut up," Isaiah snaps, and next to him, Slovacek stifles a laugh. He takes a deep, soothing breath. "You're so fucking irritating."

"I'm just making conversation," Slovacek says.

Isaiah turns up the music.

Several songs and a long lull in 'conversation' later, Isaiah has cooled down. At a red light, he sneaks a glance over at Slovacek and finds him staring out the window, fingers tapping idly against the side of the car. He looks deep in thought, his mouth set into a hard line and his brow furrowed.

Isaiah turns the music back down.

"What are you thinking about?"

Slovacek side-eyes him. "Jessica Rabbit," he answers.

Isaiah smacks him. Slovacek bursts out laughing

"Shut the fuck up," Isaiah says, but he's laughing along with him.

They've just gotten onto the highway when Slovacek says, "I gotta piss."

"You're kidding," Isaiah says tonelessly. God, this whole thing was a terrible idea. What the hell was he thinking when he came up with it? He glances over in time to see Slovacek give him a sardonic smile. "We literally *just* got on the highway. We've been in the car for, like, fifteen minutes. Why didn't you go back at the motel?"

"Because I didn't have to go at the motel," Slovacek says through gritted teeth.

"I'm not stopping," Isaiah says. "Hold it."

"I can't, I *really* have to go," Slovacek says. To preserve his own peace, Isaiah does not point out that if he has to pee that badly right now, he absolutely had to pee back at the motel. Instead, Isaiah very deliberately ignores him, one hand on the wheel and the other resting on the clutch, eyes trained on the road.

Slovacek watches. Isaiah can feel his dark eyes burning holes into the side of his head. Slovacek watches and watches, jaw clenched and steaming like a fucking seafood boil, and Isaiah keeps ignoring him.

Isaiah pretends that it isn't driving him absolutely crazy.

When it becomes clear that Isaiah is *really* not going to pull over, Slovacek lets out one of his stupidly sexy frustrated growls. His seatbelt unclicks and then he's crawling over the center console into the back of the car. The hot skin of his bare shoulder brushes Isaiah's as he moves. Isaiah purses his lips and ignores the heat pooling in his core. God, he feels like he's thirteen. Is he really *this* touch starved?

He's yanked back to reality when he hears suspicious rustling in the back of the car. "What are you doing?"

"Looking for something to piss in," Slovacek says.

"If you get piss in my car I will rip your dick off with my bare hands," Isaiah threatens.

"I won't get piss in your car," Slovacek replies, his front half buried in the backseat, and Isaiah can practically hear the eye roll. He digs around in the back for a moment before Isaiah hears a zipper.

"Are you looking through my bags!?" he asks incredulously, giving a

quick glance over his shoulder. Slovacek is stretched over the center console, ass dangerously close to Isaiah's hand, head and shoulders all but buried in Isaiah's duffel.

"No," Slovacek says, his voice muffled because he's looking through Isaiah's bag.

Isaiah jerks the steering wheel, sending Slovacek tumbling face first into the back seat.

"*Fuck*," he hisses. Isaiah lets out a loud laugh, but he's silenced when Slovacek reaches around the headrest to smack him on the ear.

Isaiah hears more shuffling, clothing rustling, then a bottle cap being twisted off. Then…

"*Ah*," Slovacek sighs contentedly.

"Good God," Isaiah groans under his breath.

Silence, aside from the quiet radio and the steady stream of Slovacek peeing in the backseat.

"Uh, Nash?"

"*What*?" Isaiah hisses.

"Bottles filling up and I'm still pissing," Slovacek says. "Pull over."

"What? No, just stop!"

"I *can't* just stop!" Slovacek says indignantly. "You can't stop mid-stream, that's insane!"

"I can't just pull over! We're going ninety!"

"Pull the fuck over!" Slovacek demands. "I'm gonna spill-"

"Nicholas fucking Slovacek I swear to God-" Now they're both yelling over each other and Isaiah feels like he's losing his fucking mind.

"Oh, fuck. Oh no."

"Are you fucking kidding me!?" Isaiah cries, banging a fist on the steering wheel. He zips into the middle lane without bothering to signal. "I'm gonna-"

Slovacek bursts into loud laughter. "I'm fucking with you, Nash. I didn't even come close to filling the bottle."

He climbs back into the front of the car and makes himself comfortable.

"You're fucking evil. Do you know that? God, I can't stand you." Isaiah exhales heavily and slumps back into his seat. "What'd you do with the pee?"

He glances over at Slovacek to see him holding up a plastic shopping bag. "Pee's in the bottle, bottle's in the bag. Didn't spill a drop. I have fantastic aim." He shoots Isaiah a wink.

Isaiah gives him a disgusted grimace. "You pee in weird places often?"

"Honestly? Yeah," Slovacek admits. "One time I was out with my buddies-"

"That was rhetorical. I don't wanna hear whatever fucked up story you're about to tell me," Isaiah says. "I've heard enough about your piss to last a lifetime.

Three hours, several piss-centric stories, and a great deal of complaining from Isaiah later, they pull into a gas station. Isaiah hops out of the car and heads into the store. He grabs some snacks, energy drinks, and a box of condoms, and dumps it onto the counter. As the cashier greets him and starts scanning his things, Slovacek sidles up next to him and sets down a haul of his own. A disgusting amount of candy, a forty of Coors, and another box of condoms. *Ribbed for her pleasure*. Isaiah rolls his eyes.

"A pack of Marb Reds and ten on pump four, too," Slovacek says to the cashier, then shoots Isaiah a wink.

"$24.68," the cashier says.

"I got it," Slovacek says, and then he pulls out Isaiah's wallet.

Isaiah doesn't bother asking how he got it or when. Instead, he just lets out a long, exasperated sigh. Slovacek hands the cashier the money, accepts the change, and slips the wallet into Isaiah's back pocket. He gives it a playful pat that has Isaiah blushing, then they're back on the road.

"We should play a game," Slovacek says a while later. It's late now,

just after sunset. They stopped at a diner for a quick bite and now they're back on the road for the last long stretch of the drive. Slovacek is halfway through his forty, cheeks pink and eyes a bit glassy.

"What game?" Isaiah asks. He knows this won't end well for him, but Slovacek has been letting him eat all his purple Skittles, so he's feeling… maybe not *generous*, since he bought the Skittles with Isaiah's money, but good enough to humor Slovacek.

"I dunno. Truth or dare."

"We're in a car," Isaiah points out. "We're pretty limited to what kind of dares we can do in here."

Slovacek rolls his eyes. "Just the truths, then."

"So a conversation," Isaiah says. "You just want us to ask each other questions."

"Christ, you're so fucking annoying. *Whatever*. Yes," Slovacek groans. "Are you in?"

"Do I have a choice?"

"No," Slovacek says. "I'll start. Would you rather…"

God. This oughta be good.

"Never jerk off again, or…." Slovacek starts, trailing off to think of an alternative.

Isaiah glances over to see Slovacek's face screwed up in thought, his lap full of candy and empty wrappers. His fingertips are stained purple from the Skittles and Isaiah wants to suck them into his mouth. He shakes the thought away and turns back to the road.

"Never get a blow job ever again."

"Blow job," Isaiah answers almost immediately, but then a vivid memory of the night before flashes in the forefront of his mind and makes him flush. Slovacek bent over him, mouth full and eyes trained on Isaiah's. Shit. Maybe he chose wrong…

Slovacek scoffs. "You're fuckin' insane. That's a horrible answer. Are you shitting me?"

Ok. Well, now he has no choice but to double down.

"No, I'm serious. *You're* insane if you would give up jerking off. It's like working out. You gotta do it. *Especially* in the marines," Isaiah says. "You think you would've made it all the way through boot camp without cranking it at all? I *barely* did and I know for a fact that I'm way less horny than you."

"I could've made it through without jerking off if I tried," Slovacek argues. "I could do it if it meant I got the best blowjob of my life at the end of it."

Isaiah doesn't believe him. Half the platoon walked in on Slovacek getting off at some point in those first three weeks or so. Not Isaiah, unfortunately, but he heard the other guys ribbing him about it.

"Sure," Isaiah says with a patronizing smile, and Slovacek rolls his eyes again. "You got any siblings?"

"*That's* your question?"

"I *asked* it, didn't I!?" Isaiah exclaims, exasperated. "Do you have to fight me on everything?"

"Yes," Slovacek smirks. "And yes. Kind of. I have half siblings, but they're all a lot younger. I don't really talk to them much."

"How many?"

"Aht aht, my turn again," Slovacek says. "What's the longest you've gone without sex?"

Isaiah blushes. He purses his lips, trying to think of an answer that doesn't make him sound like a massive loser. "I, uh…"

But, of course, Slovacek sees right through him.

"You've never?" Slovacek asks, and to his credit, he doesn't sound antagonistic. Just… surprised.

"Not, like, full blown fucking, no," Isaiah says. "Other stuff. Obviously."

"Obviously," Slovacek snorts. He's quiet for a moment. "You bought condoms."

"Yeah." Isaiah gnaws on his lower lip. "I was hoping… I dunno. I thought I'd try to make it happen on the trip."

"With… a chick?" Slovacek asks. He must be drunk if he's willing to talk about this. Isaiah steals a glance over at him and finds him picking at the label of his near empty bottle, swaying softly to the song playing quietly from the radio.

Isaiah shrugs. *No,* he wants to say. *With you, you infuriating fucking idiot.* But he knows he shouldn't. He shouldn't have gone through with this stupid trip in the first place, but it's too late for that. Instead of saying what he means, he says, "I guess, yeah."

"So are you-"

"My turn," Isaiah says, cutting him off before he can finish his question. He's too sober for that particular conversation. "Did you mess around with anyone at boot camp?"

Slovacek barks a laugh. "Fuck no. Well- no. Not *technically*."

Isaiah's brows fly to his hairline. "What do you mean?"

"I didn't *do* anything with anyone," Slovacek says. He's quiet for a moment as he bites back a smile. "But… one time, pretty early on, I caught Hicks with his hand down his pants. He, uh… He made me yell at him until he finished."

"Yell at him?" Isaiah asks, frowning in confusion.

"Yeah, like the kind of stuff the DSIs would yell at us," Slovacek says, and he lets out a laugh that's dangerously close to a giggle. It makes Isaiah's chest feel tight. "You know, like, he's worthless and pathetic and he needs to tighten up and shit like that. I snuck out to smoke one night and I found him."

Isaiah's jaw drops. *"Outside!?"*

"Yeah," Slovacek laughs. "At the bottom of that outdoor stairwell we used to get to the training course. There's a spot that's pretty hidden that I used to smoke in. Anyway, it was fuckin' weird. I think he went out there hoping he'd get caught. God, I love that freak."

"I can't believe you actually did it," Isaiah muses. "That's… nice of you? I guess?"

Slovacek shrugs. "That's my boy."

"I can't say my boys and I have ever gone *that* far for each other."

"We're boys," Slovacek points out, and the implication weighs heavily on Isaiah. Had Slovacek only hooked up with him as a favor? Could he tell how desperate Isaiah was, so he sucked him off just to put him out of his misery? Isaiah suddenly feels sick to his stomach. The air in the car feels stale and the music is grating and his seatbelt is too tight.

Hesitantly, Slovacek asks, "Aren't we?"

Isaiah swallows, his throat dry and scratchy. He nods. "We're boys. Of course."

It's nearly midnight when they pull into the hotel parking lot, and Isaiah is dying to get out of the car. It looks like a kitschy place. Nothing fancy, but good enough. It's less of a hotel and more of a series of little cottages, all attached, but with their own tiny AstroTurf front lawn. It's not quite on Broadway, but it's only a short cab ride away, and it also happens to be the first place they've come across with a glowing *vacancies* sign.

"Finally," Isaiah says as he parks and turns off the car.

"We would've gotten here hours ago if you didn't drive like a fucking grandma," Slovacek grumbles as he steps out of the car and stretches his arms above his head. Isaiah ducks his head and takes a peek at his now exposed armpit. He feels his cheeks flush. As Slovacek lets his arms fall back to his side, Isaiah clears his throat.

"Well, next time, don't get drunk off one beer so you can drive," Isaiah says, hopping out of the drivers side and doing a stretch of his own. Then, he grabs his bag from the back.

"It wasn't *one* beer, it was a forty," Slovacek argues. "It's, like, forty beers in one big bottle." He comes right up behind Isaiah and reaches over him to pull his own bag from the car, his chest brushing against Isaiah's back.

"It's not, but whatever. Stay sober and you can drive however fast you

want," Isaiah says when Slovacek straightens and takes a step back.

"You mean that?" Slovacek asks, giving him a sly smirk.

Isaiah purses his lips. "Within reason."

Slovacek's smirk broadens. He pulls out a cigarette and takes it between his teeth. "I'm a very reasonable person."

"Sure you are," Isaiah says with an eye roll. "I'll check us in. You smoke."

"Fine," Slovacek mumbles as he flicks his lighter open. As Isaiah walks past him, he smacks Slovacek on the back of the head and then darts inside, the sliding doors drowning out Slovacek's string of curses.

Isaiah stops short when he steps into the lobby. The place is, for lack of a better description, tacky as hell. Animal print rugs, red walls, leather and fringe and black and white drawings of bikers and sailors everywhere. There's a pool table in the center of the lobby, a vending machine full of cigarettes and sex paraphernalia next to a slot machine, and a tiny, though fully stocked bar along the back wall. It reeks of tobacco.

Honestly, it seems like Slovacek's kind of place. With a resigned sigh, he approaches the front desk.

"Um, hi," Isaiah says to the guy working the desk. He's a young, skinny guy dressed up like a greaser. Isaiah wonders idly if it's part of the job description or if this place just attracts this kind of person. "I just need a room for two."

He considers making it clear that they'll be needing two separate beds, but he decides to roll the dice.

"You're in luck, we have one left," the guy says, an airy smile on his face. "It's our Burning Love cottage though, so it's a little more expensive. $64 a night, is that alright?"

What the fuck is the Burning Love cottage? Elvis themed? Whatever, Isaiah just wants to get off his feet.

"S'fine," Isaiah says. He doubts he'll find anything cheaper anyway. He hands over his credit card and ID to the guy.

"Oh, we offer a military discount," the guy says. "It brings you to

$54.40 a night."

"Cool. Um, thanks," Isaiah says, giving the guy a tight smile.

"Thank *you* for your service."

He feels a little odd hearing that, especially since he hasn't really served yet, but the guy is already sliding him a key and his cards back across the counter.

"Your cottage is all the way at the end on the right," the man says. "Enjoy your stay, and let me know if you need anything." He smirks. "And I mean *anything*."

"Oh. Uh, ok. Thanks," Isaiah says with a nervous grimace, grabbing his things and meeting Slovacek back outside. "We're all set. We're staying in the one on the far right."

Slovacek nods and, to Isaiah's surprise, taps out his cigarette and discards it in the ash tray instead of tossing it on the pavement. When he sees the absolute shock on Isaiah's face, he rolls his eyes.

"Shut the fuck up," Slovacek says, shoving Isaiah and shouldering his bag. He speed walks away, making a beeline for their cottage.

"I didn't say anything," Isaiah teases, hurrying after him.

"No, but you were making that face," Slovacek says. He slows to a stop when he reaches the cottage.

"What face?" Isaiah asks. He pulls out the key, which hangs from a shiny plastic heart keychain, and unlocks the door.

"The face you make when you're about to say something fucking annoying."

"I never-" Isaiah says, but his words die in his throat as he opens the door to their lodgings.

Ah. So *that's* what the Burning Love cottage is.

Miraculously, it's even worse than the lobby. Red shag carpet, a heart shaped mattress dressed with silk sheets printed with flames. Mirrors on the ceiling and the wall across from the bed and a hot tub inlaid in the fucking floor. There's even a pole on a low platform in the center of the room. It does, at least, have a little kitchenette that looks relatively tame in comparison to the rest of the room.

"No fuckin' way," Slovacek says breathlessly as he pushes past Isaiah into the room. "Nash, you booked us a porn set!"

"He didn't tell me it was like *this*," Isaiah says, gaping at the room before him.

"What the fuck did you expect when you pulled into the parking lot of the Love Shack?"

Isaiah runs a sheepish hand over his short hair. "I honestly didn't even see the name. I just saw the vacancy sign." He makes his way into the room, letting the door fall shut behind him. He raises a brow at Slovacek, who has tossed his bag on the bed and wandered over to the pole. "If *you* saw what it was called, why didn't you say something?"

"Morbid curiosity, I guess," he says with a shrug. He launches himself onto the pole and attempts to climb it like a rope, but he doesn't get far before he comes sliding back down. "Jesus fuck, that's slippery."

Isaiah shakes his head and rolls his eyes. "How many people d'you think have fucked in this bed?" he asks, eyeing it warily.

"What about the jacuzzi?" Slovacek asks, wiping his sweaty palms on his pants, kicking off his heavy boots and giving the pole another go. "I've never done that, but my cousin's buddy hooked up with a girl in one-"

"Here we go," Isaiah says under his breath.

"They didn't even actually fuck. She just gave him a handy, but she got fucking pregnant. Apparently, jacuzzi water is hot enough that the jizz can swim through it and find its way up in the girl's pussy," Slovacek says, and Isaiah grimaces.

"There's no way that's true," Isaiah says. "That girl definitely just cheated on your buddy's cousin."

"My cousin's buddy," Slovacek corrects, voice strained as he struggles to keep his grip. He made it up to the ceiling, and now he's hanging onto the pole for dear life. "Anyway, I'll never fuck in a jacuzzi because of that."

"*That's* why? Not because it's gross and water makes horrible lube?"

"No. Well, that too, I guess." He slides down the pole and lands on his ass with a soft thud.

Isaiah sighs. Too tired to care about the bed's body count, he kicks off his shoes and collapses down onto it. He lets out a low, sleepy groan. He could fall asleep right now if it weren't for the rustling and grunting coming from Slovacek's general vicinity.

"You gonna be up playing on the pole for long?" Isaiah mumbles as he hears skin squealing against metal.

"No," Slovacek says. Another thud, louder this time, and another grunt. "You sleeping in your jeans?"

"Too tired to get undressed," Isaiah says into the pillow. Then, suddenly, he feels hands around his ankles and he's being yanked to the end of the bed. He lets out a surprised yelp.

"Wake up," Slovacek barks, then gives Isaiah's ass a stinging slap. Isaiah lets out a loud noise that he hopes comes across as more of a pained groan than the desperate moan that it is. "I refuse to share a bed with you if you're sleeping in fuckin' jeans."

"Sleep in the bathtub, asshole," Isaiah grumbles, but he rolls over and sits up. He pulls his t-shirt over his head and tosses it onto the floor, then kicks off his pants and socks.

"*You* sleep in the bathtub," Slovacek says, pulling off his own shirt and throwing it in Isaiah's face.

Isaiah *definitely* does not sneak a sniff before he whips the shirt across the room. He stands and wanders over to his bag to dig out his pajamas— blue plaid pants and a navy t-shirt. He changes while Slovacek ribs him for having a coordinated pajama set, then he grabs his toiletry bag and wanders into the bathroom to go through his nighttime routine.

When he comes back out a few minutes later, Slovacek is sprawled out on the bed in his underwear, lights still on, dead asleep. Isaiah kills the lights and climbs into bed carefully, holding his breath as he slides slowly under the silky covers. As tacky as they are, they feel nice, and the heart shape of the bed means that they have to huddle towards the middle to fit comfortably. As soon as Isaiah is settled, Slovacek flings an arm across his body and pulls him into his chest without even opening his eyes. Isaiah breaths a quiet laugh, a soft smile on his face as he curls up against Slovacek and drifts off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

calling this series caramel because these two are so very caramel by conan gray

we have slovacek pov up next!! i struggled a lot finding a voice for nash but i'm pretty happy with where i ended up. p excited to get back to writing slovacek's pov though he comes so much easier to me

Chapter 2: Butt Sex Resort

Chapter Summary

> CW we get a good deal of internalized homophobia in this chapter. i tried not to make things too angsty
>
> slovacek is spiraling a little !!!! these two sure do love pushing each other's buttons!!!!!!

Chapter Notes

> haha . lol . lmao . i meant to keep slovacek's pov in one chapter but i was on a roll and wrote a lot more than i was planning to so i'm splitting it and now this will have four chapters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Slovacek

Listen.

Nick *knows* that agreeing to go on this road trip with Nash was an all-time stupid idea. Stupider than shooting a bird during infantry week in a pathetic attempt to prove that he's better than Nash. Maybe even stupider than lying about where he was staying in an attempt to get into Nash's pants. *Definitely* stupider than reading Nash's diary to the rest of the platoon.

Funny how all his stupidest ideas have something to do with Nash.

Anyway, now Nick is in Nashville, fighting for his life because Nash keeps looking at him with those big, brown doe eyes of his. It's impossible for Nick to say no when he's pinned under Nash's gaze. *Literally* fucking impossible. Nash might actually be hypnotizing him. Like, at the diner the night before, he batted his pretty lashes at Nick and asked if he was gonna eat his pickle. And Nick *was*, and he had every intention of telling Nash to fuck off, but instead he found himself shaking his head and dropping the pickle onto Nash's plate. Then back in the car, Nash asked for a single purple Skittle, which somehow spiraled into Nick hand feeding Nash every last one. Not his smartest move, as the Skittles left him sticky and the brush of Nash's lips against his fingers left him semi-hard for the last half hour of the

drive.

But there's always tomorrow, right? He can just… reboot. Start back at square one.

It's much easier to pull himself together when he's alone. Which is not often, since he's living in this sex dungeon with Nash for the next week-ish. Thankfully, Nick is up at the crack of dawn every morning. He never sleeps well in new places, and sharing the bed with another body isn't something he's used to. Nash, on the other hand, is apparently happy to sleep the day away, and seemingly entangles himself in Nick's body as soon as he's passed out. At least, he's pretty sure that's what's happening. It's definitely not *Nick's* fault that he keeps waking up clinging to Nash.

The first morning of the trip, Nick wakes with a start. He's not used to being out of boot camp yet, and he can't shake the feeling that he has somewhere he needs to be. He sucks in a sharp breath and blinks, his heart racing as he looks around the dark room. He sees the stripper pole in the center of the room first, and the last 24 hours come back to him. Nashville. Sex dungeon. Nash. He lets his head fall back to the pillow as he catches his breath.

But then Nash shifts against him, and his heart is racing again.

Nash is curled up against him, his head resting on Nick's chest, an arm and a leg slung across Nick's body. Nick stays like that for exactly one minute. Not to indulge in the warm weight of Nash's body against his own. That would be incredibly stupid of him, and also gay. He does it because he's tired and the silk sheets feel nice against his skin, obviously.

When the clock strikes 6:28, Nick slips out from beneath Nash as carefully as he can. When he's finally on his feet and sticking a pillow where his body just was, Nash lets out a sleepy grumble. He scrunches up his face, blindly grabs for the pillow, and hugs it to his chest. Nick's heart only clenches the way it does because he probably has fucking indigestion after eating four bags of Skittles in one sitting yesterday. He holds his breath as Nash settles again. With a sigh of relief, Nick tiptoes off to the bathroom to pull himself together. And by that, he means jerk off in the shower. It's definitely not enough, but it clears his head a bit.

He ends up killing two hours before he decides it's time for Nash to wake up. It's a productive morning, at least. He goes for a long run

and gets lost along the way, but he stumbles upon a grocery store and a Waffle House *and* he gets catcalled twice. He manages to find his way back to the hotel eventually, then he takes another shower and throws on a pair of his standard issue red shorts. He doesn't get why the other guys hated them so much. They're comfy and stretchy and make his ass look great. He sneaks a peek at it in the many, many mirrors around the cottage on his way into the kitchenette.

Yup, still sexy.

Nick rifles through the cabinets until he finds a coffee maker and some grounds. He brews a pot, pours himself a cup, and heads out to sit on the front stoop with his mug and a cigarette. It's already fucking hot, but it's not quite as humid as it was in South Carolina, so at least there's that.

He's about halfway through his coffee, which is somehow both too watery and too bitter, when the door to the cottage a few down from theirs opens. A man slips out. He's tall and thin, disheveled, and clearly wearing the clothes he went out in the night before. He pauses on the stoop, and in the doorway, another man appears. Big, burly, bearded. They exchange words that Nick can't hear, and then the tall one stoops down to kiss the burly one. In broad daylight. *In public*.

Nick's eyes go wide. He looks around, panicked, but nobody else is outside to see what he's seeing. Not even a passing car.

Obviously Nick knows that gay people exist. Like, other kinds of gay people. Not just the sad, repressed variety he's used to. Gay people who just exist and don't hate themselves for the way they feel and who don't give a fuck what the people around them think. And that's… fine. Good for them. He just can't be around that. The last thing he needs is for someone to see him around someone like that and *assume*. Cause he's not *gay* gay, he just thinks gay thoughts sometimes. Does gay things on occasion, because he needs to get it out of his system. And that's fine. It has to be.

When the tall man locks eyes with Nick and gives him a sly smirk, he realizes he's been staring. His heart drops into his stomach and he quickly looks away. He tosses the end of his cigarette into his gross coffee and scurries back into the cottage.

Nick lets the door slam shut behind him, heart pounding. He bustles around loudly in the kitchen, clinking his mug in the sink and opening and closing the cabinets for no reason. He paces around the room,

footsteps heavy and uncoordinated. He needs a distraction. He looks over at the bed.

Nash is still dead to the world, snuggling Nick's pillow. He looks so peaceful. *Too* peaceful. He should leave him alone. He *should* let Nash sleep and take some more time for himself. He should do everything in his power to put distance between them.

But. Well. Nick is who he is, and it's not like he has a ton of other options at the moment.

Nick wanders across the room to where Nash left his bag. He opens it up and digs through it until he finds what he's looking for— a beat up spiral notebook. He throws himself onto the bed next to Nash, flips to a random page, and starts reading.

"Oh, this oughta be good," Nick says to himself. He clears his throat and reads, "'Mr Big Dick started a food fight on mess duty today. Not sure what crawled up his ass. He's been extra touchy lately. Heard him shouting about getting hard while he was pulling weeds earlier, so maybe he just needs to get off or something.'" He snorts. Next to him, Nash stirs.

"'I'll never forgive him for being the reason I had to scrub mystery casserole from the grout of the floor tiles, but seeing his face after Santos whipped a mug at him almost made everything worth it. The food fight was pretty fun, too, I guess. I dunno. Maybe-"

"What're you doing?" Nash asks, his voice hoarse and eyes barely open. He blinks and rubs his eyes, and Nick's stomach does a flip. Well. There goes all the progress he made this morning. "Wassat?"

"Morning paper," Nick says. He turns back to the notebook. Nash sits up in bed and looks around, clearly disoriented. Christ, how deep was he sleeping? Nick continues to read while Nash's brain catches up with reality.

"'Maybe Slovacek isn't so bad. At least he's entertaining. And-'"

He's cut off when Nash lunges at him, grabbing for the notebook, but Nick clutches it to his chest and just manages to dodge him. They roll around on the mattress until they both go tumbling over the edge, Nick laughing hysterically while Nash swears and spits like a fucking angry kitten. It's hilarious and stupidly endearing and Nick is reminded for the millionth time why this trip is a terrible idea.

"Give it," Nash grits out, kneeing Nick in the side and grabbing for the notebook. Nick rolls over onto his hands and knees and tries to scurry away, but Nash grabs him around the waist and yanks him back.

"*Fuck*." Nick grunts as his hands and the notebook slide out from underneath him. He crashes down to the floor and wacks his chin, but he ignores the stars bursting in his vision and scrambles to get his hands back on the notebook. Nash dives over him- like fucking *literally*- but he doesn't quite make it far enough, and he comes crashing down on top of Nick. Nick manages to roll onto his back underneath him, and soon enough, they're full on wrestling. Rolling around the floor of the cottage, grabbing and grappling and elbowing. They're banging into furniture and pulling blankets off the bed with wayward limbs. Nick is having the time of his life, but Nash looks *actually* angry. The longer this goes on, the more he wonders if he really fucked up. His laughter dies and his smile falters. After a particularly brutal blow to the stomach, he finally lets Nash pin him.

"Relax, Nash. I was just messing around," Nick says in a feeble attempt to smooth things over. His heart is pounding and he knows he's red all over. So is Nash, though probably not for the same reason. He's glaring down at Nick, his eyes full of fire and his mouth set in a tight frown.

"You don't get to read that," Nash hisses. "It's not fucking funny."

"It's *kinda* funny," Nick says. He's having a hard time focusing. Nash has Nick's arms stretched up over his head, pinned to the ground by his wrists. He's straddling Nick's waist, his thighs squeezing tight. The warm weight of his body is nothing if not distracting. Nick could easily toss him to the side, but he finds himself hypnotized by those big brown eyes. His pupils are fucking huge. Maybe Nash is having more fun with this than he's letting on.

"It's *not*. It's personal," Nash says.

"I already heard the worst of it," Nick says, rolling his eyes.

"That's not-" Nash says, but he stops himself and huffs impatiently. "It doesn't fucking matter. It's the principal. You don't get to snoop around and read my private thoughts."

Nick sighs dramatically. "Fine, I won't touch it again," he says, rolling his eyes. "Sorry I read your stupid diary. But can you at least tell me how that entry ends? I think I saw the word ass down the page-"

"Fuck off. No," Nash says firmly. Then, to Nick's disappointment, he releases him and stands up. He holds out a hand, and Nick accepts it, pulling himself to his feet. As soon as he's standing, Nash drops his hand and reaches around to slap Nick upside the head.

"*Ah!"* Nick hisses, flinching and rubbing the sore spot.

"You deserved that, asshole," Nash says.

And, fine, maybe he's not wrong.

The rest of the first day is easy enough. Nash is still a little pissed at Nick for a few hours after waking up to a dramatic reading of his diary, so that helps Nick with his whole dilemma. If you can even call it that. It's not *really* a dilemma. He's just horny, that's all. He'll just find a girl at a bar and get his fix and he won't be all weird about Nash anymore.

After a few hours of the cold shoulder, Nash finally breaks and complains that he's hungry. Nick tells him about the grocery store he saw and they take a trip to get some essentials for the next week, several bags of Skittles included. They eat lunch, and after it settles, Nash drags Nick out to their little turf lawn to get in a good workout. They don't even bother going out that night. He's not sure about Nash, but Nick still feels like he's catching up on three months of lost sleep. So, instead of hitting up Broadway, they have a few beers and some mediocre microwave dinners, squished together on the plasticky loveseat in their room. Aside from the awkward, lingering tension, it's not a bad day. Nick even makes Nash laugh a couple of times while they're eating. By the time Nick is crawling into bed, things are mostly normal again. He's fast asleep by the time Nash climbs in with him.

The next day is more of the same, except instead of the grocery store, they hit the video store to stock up on movies to keep them entertained while they're just sitting around at the hotel during the day.

The first day, neither of them had any idea their room has a TV. But, after Nick makes a joke that the nightstand probably has a copy of the Kama Sutra instead of a bible, Nash takes a peek and finds a remote (and also the Kama Sutra). The two of them spend a good fifteen minutes scouring the room for the TV until Nash starts fucking with the mirrors on the wall across from the bed. Eventually, he manages to find the one that hides the entertainment system. They turn the TV on excitedly, but their faces immediately drop when they find a dozen porn channels, and nothing else.

"Figures," Nash mutters, flicking off the TV right before a frat party devolves into an orgy. His cheeks are bright red and he won't make eye contact. Nick is simultaneously very grateful and incredibly disappointed as the TV goes black. "Least there's a VCR. There's gotta be a Blockbuster around here."

Of course there's a Blockbuster.

They rent their movies, but now they're both too spooked to turn the TV back on to flip it to the input channel. So, for now, the tapes sit untouched in a stack on the loveseat. Maybe they'll be braver after they've had a few drinks. Seems to be the case with them.

They go out that night, but it's relatively tame. Nick doesn't find a girl to get his fix with. He sits shoulder to shoulder with Nash, picking at a basket of chips and sipping cheap whiskey. There's a guy with a guitar singing some old school country music. Nick's not much of a country fan, but he sucks it up. Nash seems happy to be there, swaying back and forth in his seat, brushing against Nick with every movement.

The place empties out once the guitarist packs up, so Nick and Nash head back to the hotel. Nick considers fiddling with the TV, but he doesn't trust himself right then. His self control is already hanging on by a thread. Instead, he climbs into bed, and he and Nash go back and forth quizzing each other with sports trivia until they fall asleep.

It's not long before things start to unravel. The further they get from their time at boot camp, the easier it is for Nick to forget why this trip is a bad idea. Why *Nash* is a bad idea. He keeps smiling at Nick with that fucking lopsided smile, making him laugh and looking at him with his fucking eyes.

On the third morning, Nick wakes up with Nash in his arms once again. He lingers much longer than he did the first two mornings. *Too* long. But he can't help it. He's so comfortable, and Nash is so warm

and heavy against him. They've tangled themselves in a way that has Nick's nose buried in the crook of Nash's neck, so he's all he can smell.

When Nick has to pee too badly to lay there any longer, he removes himself carefully, like he's defusing a bomb. Just as he's getting to his feet, Nash rolls over and blinks tiredly.

"Watimeizit?" Nash mumbles. He's desperately fighting sleep, but he's losing. He can barely keep his eyes open.

"Six," Nick says softly. "Go back to sleep."

"Mmph." Nash buries his face in his pillow.

Nick goes through the morning routine he's created for himself, but he's only halfway through his run when he finds himself itching to get back and bug Nash. He doesn't turn around, but he stops at a crosswalk and seriously considers it. Instead, he runs an extra mile.

When he gets back, rather than jumping straight into the shower like he usually does, Nick decides to make a pit stop in the lobby in the hopes of finding some decent coffee. After two failed attempts with their machine, he's desperate for something decent.

When he steps into the lobby, it's… not what he's expecting. It's gaudy, but that's not what he's hung up on. It's all the gay shit that he's having a hard time with.

First he notices the vending machine, and he has to do a double take. Cigarettes, sure. He's seen that before at a couple of bars in his hometown. Condoms, alright. A little surprising, but he gets it, especially given how porny their cottage is. But lube? Cock rings? Fucking *butt plugs!?* Now, Nick isn't a prude or anything, but *really?*

Then, he notices the art. And if the vending machine isn't enough to shed some light on this place, the decor will. All over the walls, mixed in with yellow playbills and riding crops, are black and white drawings of buff biker dudes rubbing their dicks together. No wonder those two guys were cool with kissing in front of him. This place is homo heaven!

Nick jumps when he hears a voice.

"Can I help you with anything?" Asks the man staffing the front desk. Nick whips around to stare at him, wide-eyed and definitely flushed. He's suddenly *very* aware that he's shirtless and drenched in sweat, his

thighs barely covered by his stupid little red shorts.

He blinks. Why the fuck did he come in here again? He looks around, and the sight of a metal pitcher and a stack of paper cups on the front desk jogs his memory. *Right.* "Um. Coffee."

"Got some hot and ready for you," the man says, giving Nick a playful wink.

Nick grunts in response. He quickly fills a pair of cups, grabs a fistful of creamer cups and sugar packets, then makes a beeline for the door.

"If you need any more sugar, just let me know," the man calls after Nick on his way out.

Nick speed walks back to their cottage, bursting through the door and letting the door slam behind him. He deposits the coffees onto the kitchen counter, then stomps over to the bed and yanks Nash's pillow out from under his head. As he blinks awake, Nick whacks him with it.

"Hey!" Nash cries, just barely rolling out of the way in time to miss Nick's second blow. He bolts upright and hides his face behind his forearms, and if Nick wasn't so fucking pissed at him, he'd be impressed by how quickly he's up. "What the fuck!?"

Nick can't help the frustrated growl he lets out.

"You-" *whack*- "booked us-" *whack*- "a fucking-" *whack*- "BUTT SEX RESORT!" *Whack. Whack. Whack.*

*"*Wait*, what?"* Nash asks incredulously, catching the pillow as comes hurtling towards him yet again and tearing it roughly from Nick's grasp.

"This place is gay," Nick seethes. His arms hang by his sides, fists clenching and unclenching as he tries to regulate his stupid fucking emotions. "For gay people. For them to *fuck*. If we're seen here-"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Nash says. He tosses the pillow aside. "Start from the beginning. What the hell do you mean, this place is gay?"

Nick gapes at him. "What do you mean, what do I mean?" he asks, throwing his arms out in disbelief. "*You* checked us in. *You* saw the lobby."

"Yeah, I mean… It was weird and a little tacky, but gay? That's kind of homophobic, even for you," Nash says, furrowing his brow.

Nick exhales sharply through his nose, jaw clenched.

"It's not gay because it's tacky. It's gay because there's gay porn all over the walls and butt plugs in the fucking vending machine," Nick says. His chest is heaving, his breathing slow and deliberate.

Nash's eyes go wide. "Those things are for your butt?"

"Not *my* butt," Nick says, brows raised to his hairline. He probably looks insane. He kind of *feels* insane. He points to Nash threateningly. "*Yours*, along with my fucking foot for getting us into this situation, you complete fucking dumbass!"

Nash looks unimpressed. "Look- I didn't realize this place was gay. I just saw that they had vacancies. If you really have *that* much of a problem staying around gay people-"

"That's not the issue," Nick hisses. "The issue is that you booked *us,* two men in the fucking marines, where it's *illegal* to be gay, a room at the fucking Butt Sex Resort. If anyone sees us here, we're fucked. Me especially, in case you forgot." He scrubs a hand over his face. "God, this is a fucking disaster. And to top it all off, we're gonna roll up to Lejeune together like a married couple-"

"*Hey*. Slow your roll, Slovacek," Nash says as Nick starts pacing the floor, the heels of his hands pressed into his eyes. He hears the sheets shifting as Nash gets to his feet, then Nick is stopped in his tracks when firm hands grip his wrists. He lowers his hands from his face and looks at Nash. His brown eyes are wide, urging Nick to focus on him. He doesn't look mad or annoyed. Instead, his brow is furrowed, and he has a small, concerned frown on his face.

It helps, for whatever reason. Looking at Nash.

"Nobody is gonna catch us. And if they do, they'll *also* be at the Butt Sex Resort, so it's not like they have any ground to stand on," he points out. Nick stops pacing and takes a deep breath. "In the extremely rare case that we do see someone we know, we can just explain the situation to them. We booked this place by mistake. We're not gay." His voice falters as he says the last word, and he glances away for half a second.

Nick takes a deep breath and nods.

"We're fine. Alright? And we don't have to worry about Lejeune," Nash says. Nick furrows his brow. "I'm just dropping you off."

"Wait, what?" Nick feels like he was just doused in ice water.

Nash lets his hands fall back to his sides. "Yeah. I'm going back to school, remember? I'm not doing SOI till next Summer, so it's not like anyone will see us pulling up together."

"You're not… we're not…" Nick stammers. God, he sounds pathetic. But, well… He can't help it. First no Bowman, now no Nash?

Pull it the fuck together. Nick steps back and gives him a bitter smile. "How nice for you. You breeze through boot camp, go on a little vacation, then get to go back home to your cushy life. Finish on your own terms."

Nash scowls at him. "I didn't *breeze* through boot camp. And it's not like I'm gonna be at home sitting around the whole time. I have class and an internship and track. I'm gonna be busting my ass this semester."

Nick rolls his eyes. "Right, that sounds so much worse than what I'll be doing."

"It's not like I get to just skip it," Nash says. "I still have to do all the same shit you'll be doing. Honestly, I think it's worse this way. I won't know anyone *and* I'll be out of practice."

Nick breathes a humorless laugh. "Sure. Whatever."

He isn't sure why he's so hurt by this. He should've realized that Nash wouldn't be coming to Lejeune with him. It makes sense that he'll be going back to school, but that doesn't take away the sting. It just makes him feel like an idiot. Is that why Nash asked him to come on this trip? One last hurrah to hopefully keep him going through SOI? He feels like one of those sad old dogs who's getting put down the next day. Here's a cheeseburger and some chocolate, buddy. Enjoy it while you can.

Christ, he's pathetic. He must look it, because Nash murmurs, "I'm sorry."

"Why?" Nick snaps.

"I dunno. I just… am," he says with a sad shrug. "I'd rather not wait.

I'd rather go through this with you." He blushes and adds quickly, "And, um, the rest of the guys. Obviously. But it's probably better this way anyway. There won't be any…"

Risk? Temptation? Chance of them ever fucking seeing each other again? Nick feels sick to his stomach. Nash is right. This probably is better. But he'd rather die than say those words, and also, even if it *is* better, it fucking sucks.

"Whatever," Nick mumbles.

"I can, um…" Nash runs a nervous hand over his short hair. "I'll write, if you want."

Nick very briefly considers scoffing at Nash's offer. Maybe calling him gay for suggesting it and teasing him about wanting to write him love letters or some shit like that. But as soon as Nash puts it out there, Nick realized how badly he wants that. He didn't get any letters from home while he was at boot camp. The thought of getting one from Nash…

Well. He wants that.

So, rather than poking fun and risking putting Nash off from the idea, he gives a silent, tight nod.

"I'll give you my address before I drop you off. Write to me with your return address once you get settled," Nash says, and Nick nods again.

There's a long, tense silence. When Nick can't bear the weight of it anymore, he clears his throat. He nods to the hot cups on the counter.

"I got coffee." It's probably cold by now, but he's desperate to change the subject. "And some cream and sugar. I know you like your coffee to taste like a fucking milkshake-"

Nash scoffs, and Nick's stomach settles at the familiar sound. "I do *not!* Just because I think black coffee is gross doesn't mean I go around drinking caramel mochaccinos or whatever." He rolls his eyes dramatically.

Nick smirks as he watches Nash stomp over to the cup, tear open a stack of sugar packets with his teeth, and dump them all into the coffee.

"Sure," Nick says, taking a sip of his black coffee. "Whatever you say,

Princess."

"God, you're so fucking irritating," Nash says, but there's a smile playing at his lips. He dumps several coffee creamers into his cup. Then he looks up at Nick, his gaze slowly dragging up and down his body. "So, you walked into the lobby of the Butt Sex Resort like that?"

Nick folds his arms across his chest, watching as Nash licks his lips, eyes trained shamelessly on Nick's bulging biceps. Nick feels himself flush. He's always fucking *looking* with those fucking *eyes*. "Yeah, I *did*, and the guy at the front desk told me to let him know if I need any extra sugar."

Nash cracks a broad grin. "Well, are you gonna take him up on that offer?"

Nick scoffs. "Fuck no. That prissy little fucker couldn't handle me. He looks like he could barely handle Cope."

"Mm, you're definitely challenging," Nash muses, taking a sip of his coffee abomination. Nick beams at him. "Oh, no. That wasn't meant to be a compliment."

Nick glares at him. "Asshole."

And, at least for now, things are normal-ish again.

Chapter End Notes

i'm gonna keep on dancin at the butt sex resort !!

this one was a little short but i think this is a good spot to leave off given what i have coming up

Chapter 3: Fuck Me Eyes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Slovacek

"I wanna get fucked up tonight," Nick says as he spreads peanut butter over a slice of Wonder Bread. "We should go out. Like, *out* out. Not just to the bar down the block."

"Ok," Nash says through a mouthful of his sandwich. He eyes Nick warily. "Do you have any real clothes with you?"

Nick frowns at him. "All my clothes are real clothes."

"They're not. Most of them are just underwear that you wear outside," Nash points out.

Nick looks down at himself. When they're just hanging around the Butt Sex Resort like they're doing right now, he usually just wears his shorts. But when they leave, he'll put on a muscle shirt or a wife beater and sometimes, even sweatpants. "They cover me. What's the issue?"

"They *barely* cover you. I can't remember that last time I looked at you and couldn't see at least one of your nipples."

Nick shrugs and sucks peanut butter from the tip of his thumb. Nash watches him do it, his gaze all heavy lidded and needy. God, Nick should get him a pair of sunglasses or something. Has it always been like this, or is it new? He doesn't remember Nash being so… *looky* at boot camp. But, to be fair, he had a lot of other shit to worry about at boot camp.

"I'm doing everyone a favor. I got cat called twice on my run yesterday. The people love it."

Nash rolls his eyes. "*The people* need to stop encouraging you," he grumbles.

Nick grins at him.

Nash sits back in his chair and levels Nick with a stare. "I'm not going out with you if you're wearing sweatpants."

Nick's smile falls as quickly as it came. "What the fuck do you want me to do? I don't have anything else. Should I make the silk sheets into a fucking gown? Or should we go to the mall so you can dress me up like a doll and run up your credit card bill?"

"No," Nash sighs. He pinches the bridge of his nose, as if just the thought is giving him a headache. *Thank god*. Nick would rather die than waste his leave clothes shopping. "Just wear some of my clothes. I have, like, half my wardrobe with me since I'm going back to DC from here."

Nick raises a brow at him. "Did you make your parents pack your shit for you? Spoiled brat."

Nash gives him a look. "No, I packed it myself at the beginning of summer," he explains, his patience for Nick clearly quickly depleting. "Do you want my fucking clothes or not?"

"Will they even fit me? I mean, I'm so *huge*-"

"Shut the fuck up," Nash says, exasperated, and Nick lets out a peal of loud laughter.

After they eat, Nash drags an overstuffed suitcase in from the car, heaves it onto the bed, and throws it open. He glances over his shoulder at Nick, who has come to stand just behind him. Nash turns back to the suitcase and starts digging. He pulls out a pair of jeans and a faded, striped button up and hands both to Nick.

"I think those should fit," Nash murmurs thoughtfully as he looks back to the suitcase.

Nick accepts the clothes with a frown. The jeans are just jeans, but the shirt is softer than any button up he's ever felt. And it has a collar! It's *way* too nice for him. He peeks over Nash's shoulder into the suitcase. There are at least three sweater vests that he can see, and nearly everything is striped, plaid, or checked. He hasn't put much thought into what Nash typically wore when he wasn't in uniform, but for the last few days, he's basically been living in jeans and a t-shirt. He was expecting more of *that*, not an entire fucking Ralph Lauren store.

Nash looks back at him again. He gestures impatiently. "Are you gonna try them on or what?"

Nick furrows his brow. "You sure you want me wearing this?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Seems like nice stuff," Nick says, rubbing the fabric between his fingers.

"They're just clothes. I already have too many," Nash says. He gives Nick a smirk. "Besides, I'd rather risk you staining that stuff than have to endure a night out with you in your fucking wife beater."

"Fucking snob," Nick snorts, and Nash laughs. "I'm gonna look ridiculous in this."

"Try it on. I wanna see," Nash says with a shrug, and he bats his stupid, pretty lashes at Nick and now he *has* to do it. He wonders if Nash has any idea of the power he has over him. Probably, which is both dangerous and also a major fucking turn on.

With a reluctant sigh, Nick strips out of his comfy clothes and pulls on Nash's stuff. The jeans fit, though they're a little tight. He has to wiggle a little to get them over his butt, and he catches Nash watching him *again*. Honestly, Nick needs to just stop looking at him. He leaves the shirt unbuttoned, hopeless on how he's supposed to style it. He glances over at himself in the many mirrors. He was right— he looks completely ridiculous.

"I look like that little blonde fuck from Saved By the Bell," he grumbles. He's never looked less like himself. Nick rarely wears color, and he *definitely* doesn't wear button ups. He feels like he's playing dress up.

Nash barks a loud laugh. "Zack Morris? You look like you mugged him," he teases, and Nick can't hold back a laugh of his own.

"Do you have a regular t-shirt or something? I can't deal with these fucking pastels," Nick says, grimacing as he pulls the shirt closed. Or, at least, tries to. It barely stretches across his chest. If he buttons it, one wrong move will bust it right open.

"There's a few in here somewhere," Nash says, picking through the pile again.

Nick pulls off the shirt and tosses it onto the bed, then starts digging through Nash's suitcase. He pulls out a purple t-shirt with weird gold shapes on the front.

"What's this?" he asks, frowning at the shirt. "Are these those Egyptian symbols?"

Nash looks up, a confused frown on his face. When he sees what Nick is holding, he rolls his eyes. "Oh. No, those are Greek letters. That's my fraternity."

Nick's eyes go wide. "You're in a *frat?"* Christ. How many fucking extracurricular activities is he a part of?

Nash gives him a warning glare. "Yes," he says through gritted teeth. "And before you make any jokes, it's a respectable organization. It's not like the stuff you see in movies. We do a ton of philanthropic work."

"And you also jerk each other off after you play beer pong," Nick teases, and Nash smacks his arm.

"*No*, asshole. We host formal charity events and shit. I usually don't even drink at them. And I've definitely never jerked off any of my brothers," Nash says, and Nick grimaces. Nash pulls a graphic t-shirt out and whips it at him. "Here. Put this on."

Nick holds it up. It's just a black Run DMC shirt. Why he hell didn't Nash just give him this in the first place? He pulls it on and checks himself out. It's a little tight around his arms, but otherwise, it's fine.

"This would probably look a lot better without sleeves," he muses, flexing in the mirror.

"If you rip the sleeves off that they're going down your throat," Nash says, but he's distracted by the reflection of Nick's biceps. He watches Nash lick his lips.

Nick flushes. He yanks at the collar of the shirt and pulls on the chain around his neck. Suddenly, everything feels too tight. Flirting with Nash when he thought it wouldn't go anywhere was one thing. It was just dumb fun, a couple of buddies fucking around. But now, there's weight to it. Implications to his words and actions that could have *very real* consequences. Nick's reminded of that fact every time he feels the heat of Nash's gaze trailing over his body. All he can do is hope that Nash doesn't actually make a move on him.

So, as badly as he wants to tell Nash he can shove something else down his throat, Nick restrains himself. But it's *difficult*. He's hanging on by a thread here, and Nash is hacking away at it with every

lingering look.

"I need a cigarette," Nick mumbles, wandering over to the kitchen counter and snatching up the pack of cigarettes he left there.

"Alright. I'm gonna get dressed and call us a cab," Nash says, and Nick nods, slipping the pack into his pocket and pulling on his shoes. He doesn't sit on the stoop like he normally does to have a smoke. Instead, he paces through the parking lot, unlit cigarette between his teeth because he's too distracted to remember to light it.

It was stupid of him to agree to this fucking trip. He knows that. He just didn't expect it to be *this* difficult. But *why?* Nick has had plenty of hook ups in his life, and none of them ever had him this fucked up. Christ, even his long term girlfriends affected him less. Except… *Well.* There was one person, but Nick feels sick to his stomach whenever he thinks about that. So he doesn't.

Instead, he paces. Twists his chain around his finger until the tip turns purple. Bites down on the cigarette until bitter tobacco spills into his mouth. His heart is racing and there's a heavy weight pressing against his chest that he can't fucking shake. He probably shouldn't go out tonight. He probably should stay in. By himself. He'll tell Nash to go without him-

But then he hears Nash calling his name. He whips his head around to look and pulls the busted cigarette from his mouth, stuffing it into his pocket haphazardly.

No, there's no fucking way he's staying in. Nash looks- he looks so… God. The only word for it is *cute*. *Eugh*. But it's true, he looks so fucking *cute* in his goofy little sweater vest and there's no goddamn way Nick can bail on him now.

"Why are you all the way out here?" Nash asks as he jogs over to Nick.

Nick shrugs. "Sometimes I wander when I smoke. Is that not allowed?"

"It's fine, it just…" Nash wrinkles his nose. "Did you already smoke? It doesn't smell."

"Yeah, I smoked," Nick says, because Nash absolutely cannot know how much of a train wreck he is. "Your nose probably just sucks."

"Don't think so," Nash says. He leans in close, and Nick freezes. He holds his breath, hands balled into fists as Nash hovers just below his

ear. He can hear him inhale, feel the heat radiating off of his body. Nick keeps his eyes trained forward, fists clenched at his sides. The last bit of rationality that's slowly suffocating in his useless brain tells him to step back. Put some distance between them.

He doesn't.

"I smell *you* just fine." Nash's voice is low and rumbling in his ear.

That last bit of rationality lets out a death rattle. *Oops*.

"You callin' me a liar?" Nick asks quietly.

Nash shrugs. He takes half a step back. They're still too close for comfort. "I'm just saying. You're acting suspicious."

"Why would I lie about that?"

Because you're a fucking mess, dumbass. Get it together. He forces himself to meet Nash's gaze. He's eyeing Nick warily, but his cheeks are flushed and his pupils are too big.

"I dunno, why would you?" Nash asks. His brow furrows. "Are you alright?"

"Fine," Nick says too quickly. "I'm fine. I just… Shirt's a little tight," he mumbles, tugging at the fabric stretched across his chest.

"Well, you look good," Nash says matter-of-factly, brushing his hand across the shirt to smooth it out once it bounces back. God, Nick really can't handle this right now.

"You look like a dork," Nick grumbles, and Nash lets out a surprised laugh. "Seriously, who the fuck wears a sweater vest out to the bar?"

"Hey, I think it's nice," Nash says, throwing his arms out in disbelief and looking down at himself. "It's cool. They're trendy. You just don't get it."

"Must be a college thing," Nick says, rolling his eyes. He fiddles with his chain again, and Nash's gaze darts right to it.

He watches Nick fidget for a moment, a concerned frown on his face. "Did you change your mind about going out? We don't have to-"

"No, I wanna go," Nick says firmly. "I just… I think I need a drink."

God, is that an understatement.

"Well, I think that's our cab," Nash says, nodding to the taxi pulling into the parking lot. Sure enough, it pulls up in front of their cottage. He claps Nick on the back. "Let's go. Just let me know if you wanna come back, alright?"

Nick gives him a tight nod, then follows him to the taxi.

The bar they end up at is crazy busy despite it being the middle of the week. The lights are low, the floor is sticky, and the music is loud. It's not country, at least, so Nick's happy, and Nash convinced Nick to do green tea shots with him, so *he's* happy. They find themselves a spot to stand while they wait for the buzz to kick in.

It's a little weird at first. It's been so long since Nick has been out like this. He doesn't really count the dive bar or that night celebrating with the boys after boot camp. When he goes out like *this*, it's usually with the intention of getting laid. He has to assume Nash has the same intention since he bought those condoms, but the thought of Nash picking up a girl while Nick watches is making him miserable. Not because he's jealous or anything. Nash can sleep with whoever he wants. He's just… dreading the thought of having to sleep on the floor while Nash fucks someone.

Someone else.

Nick winces at the thought. It's sour and sits heavy in his stomach. He takes a long pull of the beer he's drinking, but it doesn't settle anything. He just feels fucking bloated now.

Maybe he can sabotage Nash. Scare off any girls that approach him. Nick's good at that. Or maybe he can just find one for himself first and call dibs on the bed. But the thought of fucking a girl while *Nash* sleeps on the floor doesn't make him feel any better…

Nash says something, but he doesn't hear it over the din of the bar and the whirring of his stupid thoughts. Nick can tell it's a question based on the way Nash is looking at him expectantly, a brow raised.

"Hm?" Nick hums. They lock eyes, and the static in his brain melts

away.

"Don't like your beer?" Nash asks.

"Oh," Nick says, frowning at the bottle. He's gotta get better about not wearing his thoughts all over his face. "Not really. Think it's skunked or something."

"Mine kinda sucks too," Nash says. "Want a shot?"

Nick grimaces. "Another? Of *what?"*

"I'll take that as a yes," Nash says with a mischievous grin. He snatches Nick's nearly empty bottle from his hand. "Be right back. Don't move."

Nick doesn't point out that there's really nowhere for him to go. The bar is completely packed. Instead, he just lets out a resigned breath and watches as Nash maneuvers through the crowd to order them shots.

He's alone for all of thirty seconds before a pair of girls approach him. A blonde and a brunette, both wearing cowboy boots and tiny denim shorts. Objectively hot, but Nick can't bring himself to pretend to be interested in either of them. His gaze keeps flicking to the top of Nash's head as he bobs through the crowd. But, unfortunately, they linger.

When it's clear they're here to stay, he frowns down at them. The girls smile back expectantly.

"What? D'you want drugs or something?" Nick asks, brow furrowed.

The blonde laughs. "No, we just think you're cute."

Cute. Nick scoffs. He's not *cute*. Nash is cute.

The brunette says, "We thought we'd see if you wanted to buy us a drink."

Nick's frown deepens. "Both of you?"

"Why not?" says the blonde. Next to her, the brunette smirks.

"Uh, I'm here with my friend," he says, nodding in the direction that Nash is headed. He's pretty sure he's never felt so awkward in his fucking life. "He just went to get us drinks…"

"We saw," the blonde says, an uncomfortable grimace on her face. "I'm sure he'll understand—"

"Wait, you're not interested in him?" Nick asks. "Just me?"

The brunette nods avidly. The blonde, at least, has the decency to look apologetic.

"We don't mind sharing," says the brunette, and the blonde elbows her in the side. She hisses at her to shut up, then turns back to Nick.

"It's just, he's not really our type…"

"Why not?" Nick asks. The girls blink at him.

Maybe they're dumb?

"Well, he just looks a little-"

"Dorky," the brunette supplies, her tone matter of fact. She's the type of girl Nick would normally go for. Dark hair, dark eyes. Blunt to the point of being a little mean and looking at him like she wants to suck the life out of him. "It's the sweater vest, mostly."

Nick scowls at her. "The sweater vest is nice," he says, as if he didn't call it dorky less than an hour ago. "It's *trendy*. But- fuck, *whatever*- I'm not ditching him to get involved in whatever freaky shit you two have going on. Find someone else to work that out with."

The girls look shocked, but it gets them to leave. Nick lets out a frustrated huff. If he wasn't already spiraling, he *really* is now. He grits his teeth and puts on a dead-eyed scowl in the hopes that it'll deter any other hopefuls.

It works, but he has a throbbing headache from clenching his jaw too hard by the time Nash rejoins him.

"What's your problem?" Nash asks, handing Nick a shot and a lime wedge. He has one for each of them, along with a couple of drinks tucked under his arm.

"Nothing," Nick says. "Just don't want people to talk to me."

"Well, looks like you succeeded," Nash says, looking around with raised brows. "You managed to clear us a pretty wide berth."

"You're fucking welcome, then," he says with a smirk. Nash laughs.

"Lick the back of your hand," Nash says. Nick gives him a skeptical frown, but he obeys. Nash grabs a salt shaker from a nearby table and dumps it into the wet spot.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"Salt for the shot," Nash says. He bites back a grin. "Why'd you think I asked you to lick your hand?"

"I didn't fucking know why," Nick exclaims. "I thought it was weird."

"But you still did it?" Nash asks, unable to hold back his grin now. It stretches across his face, makes his eyes crinkle at the corners. And god dammit, there's that dimple. Nick feels like he might throw up, but like… in a good way. But also in a bad way, because *he shouldn't feel like this.* "That's so cute-"

"Shut the fuck up," Nick says, rolling his eyes. He grumbles, "S'not cute."

Nash's smile softens into something smaller. Sweeter. The weight that's been pressing on Nick's chest all night eases up, and he feels his cheeks warm. He can't bring himself to look away as Nash licks the back of his own hand and sprinkles it with salt.

When he's done with the salt, he sticks it back on the table and holds up his shot glass. "Lick, shoot, suck. Ready?"

Nick blinks dumbly at him. "What?"

"Lick the salt, shoot the tequila, suck the lime," he explains.

"I guess," Nick grumbles. He taps the lip of his glass to Nash's. "Oorah, motherfucker."

Nash gives him a crooked smile. "Oorah."

And Nick licks, shoots, and sucks. And winces and shivers. And accidentally chomps into his lime wedge as he watches Nash wrap his lips around his own. *Fuck*. Gross. He spits it into his hand and shoves it into his empty shot glass, which he discards on the table that is quickly becoming their trash disposal. There's a couple sitting at it, squeezed into one side of the booth and making out aggressively. Nick doesn't think they'll care.

"Eugh. Alright," Nash says. He hands Nick one of the drinks, and Nick

takes a long sip. He makes a face. He has no idea what it is, but it's strong. "So. What'd those girls want?"

"Hm?" Nick hums. "What girls?"

"Those two that came up to talk to you when I left," Nash says. Someone bumps into his back, and he takes a step closer to Nick.

"Oh," Nick says. Right. *Those* girls. The ones he talked to less than ten minutes ago. "Uh, drugs."

Nash looks genuinely shocked. "They thought you were a drug dealer?"

"Well," Nick says wish a sheepish shrug, "that isn't exactly *wrong."*

"So you were actually dealing?" Nash asks. "I thought you were just kind of… I dunno, the muscle, or whatever." He blushes as he says this.

"I was. But I did sell a little, too. Mostly just weed." Nick gives a half smirk and takes another swig of his drink. "You ever smoked, college? Done X at one of your frat paries?"

Nash rolls his eyes. "Fuck off. No, I don't do drugs."

"Mm, you're too much of a good boy to fuck around with that stuff," Nick teases, and Nash blushes further. *Interesting.*

Why was this trip a bad idea again?

"Are you a bad boy, then?" Nash asks, quirking an unimpressed brow at him, and it makes Nick's stomach flip. "Did you cut class to smoke in the bathroom? Pick fights in the cafeteria?"

Nick snorts. "Pretty much, yeah. *But,"* he gives a wry smile, *"*I was also a star fucking athlete."

"Yeah? What'd you play? No- wait, let me guess," Nash says. He narrows his gaze on Nick and looks him up and down. "Hockey."

Nick scoffs. "I couldn't afford to play hockey. I played football."

"Isn't football expensive too?"

"Yeah, but my mom dated the coach for a while, so we didn't have to pay any of the fees or whatever. Plus, my big cousin gave me all his

gear from when he played," Nick explains. He grins at Nash. "What made you think I played hockey? Is it cause I'm white?"

Nash barks a laugh. "No, asshole. I assumed you played hockey because you're a goddamn brute. I figured strapping some blades on your feet and checking guys into the boards at full speed would be right up your alley. Plus-" Nash stops himself. He purses his lips and looks away.

"Plus what?" Nick presses, brows raised.

Nash screws up his face like he already regrets what he's about to say, but then he says it anyway. "Plus your ass."

"What do you mean, plus my ass?" Nick asks, eyes wide.

"It's just…" Nash squirms uncomfortably. Fiddles with his straw, rocks back and forth on his toes. "It's big. That's a thing, isn't it? Hockey players have big butts?"

"Is it a thing?" Nick asks. Then, because he's stupid and buzzed and wants to hear Nash talk about his ass some more, he asks, "You think my ass is too big?"

"No, not- not *too* big," Nash stammers, and Nick has never seen him so red. "It's big, though. You must know that."

Nick shrugs innocently. "Hadn't noticed."

"Please," Nash scoffs. "You stare at your own ass more than-" He stops himself again. He must already be feeling the alcohol. His words are coming a little too freely.

"More than who?" Nick smirks.

"Come on, Slovacek," Nash says, barely discernible above the bar noise. He glances around before looking back at Nick, a slight pout to his full lips, brow furrowed. Desperate and resigned, but there's still something mischievous about it. Like he knows Nick is just about at his breaking point, too, and Nash wants to take him down with him. Nash licks his lips and says, "I know you see me."

They stand there for a long moment, just looking at each other. Nicks breaths are slow and deliberate, and Nash is doing that thing again where he can't decide whether to look Nick in the eyes or down at his mouth. His gaze lingers on Nick's lips for a little too long, and Nick

actually worries that Nash might try to kiss him in the middle of this fucking bar. And that would be bad, because… Well, Nick can't really remember *why* at the moment. All he can really think about are Nash's pink cheeks and his full lips and his stupid eyes.

Someone bumps into Nick, jostling him back to reality. He shakes his head and takes a deep breath.

"Uh, I gotta piss," he says. He sucks down the rest of his drink in one long, eye-watering gulp. "And I need another drink. Want one?"

"Oh," Nash says, blinking like he just woke up. "Um. Yeah, please. I got us long islands if you wanted to order the same thing. There's a tab under my name."

Nick gives him a tight smile and a curt nod, then hurries off to the bathroom. He doesn't have to pee. He just needs to get himself together. *Right fucking now.*

Nick stands in front of the sink for a few minutes, staring at his reflection until he doesn't recognize his features, hands gripping the edge of the sink tight. Now that he's alone, his brain is working again, and he kind of hates it. His mind is moving too fast and the weight is pressing against his chest again. He's starting to like the way his thoughts slow and dissolve into a quiet murmur when he's around Nash. He doesn't really understand why it happens. Maybe it's because Nash is so much smarter than Nick that he feels like he can just turn his mind off around him. Or maybe it's just because Nash is nice to look at and it makes Nick's dumb caveman brain feel good. Either way, it's better than *this*.

Two minutes alone with his thoughts and Nick is already itching to get back with Nash and make it all go quiet again. He runs the tap and splashes cold water on his face. He blots himself dry with a paper towel, lets out a resigned grunt, and slips out of the bathroom. He shoves his way to the bar to order two more long islands, and while the bartender is mixing then, he stretches up onto his tiptoes to look back at the spot where he left Nash.

He's not there.

Nick's heart plummets into his stomach. Did Nash *really* fucking ditch him? He searches the bar, looking for warm, brown skin, buzzed hair, a dorky sweater vest. Finally he sees him, right on the edge of the dance floor and already looking at Nick. He gives him a bright smile and beckons him over with a nod. Immediately, Nick's stomach settles.

He smiles back at Nash and gestures to the bar to let him know he's getting their drinks. When they're done, the bartender slides them over to Nick, who tells them to put it under Nash's tab. Nick takes a sip from the top of each so they don't spill all over his hands while he's walking. God, they're even stronger this time. Surely he won't regret these in the morning.

Nick elbows through the crowd again, his sights set on Nash. By the time Nick gets to him, there's a girl hanging off Nash, pulling him down by the shoulder so she can yell in his ear. He's nodding along to whatever she's saying, but when Nick taps him and holds out his drink, he straightens, that grin stretching across his face again. Warmth blooms in Nick's chest. He wants to get closer. He wants to press himself against Nash's body, grab him tight by the waist, feel the heat from his skin. He wants to smell the mix of fancy aftershave and laundry detergent that's embedded itself in his mind. He wants to—

He wants to fucking kiss him.

Nick shuts the thought down so fast it gives him whiplash. Thinking about fucking the guy is one thing. But waxing poetic about *kissing him?* He can't have that.

When Nash accepts the cup from Nick, their fingers just barely brush, and it send a jolt straight through Nick. It feels like he's been fucking tased. This is gonna be a long fucking night.

"I moved cause I wanna dance," Nash calls out over the music.

Nick barks a laugh. "Of course you do."

"Dance with us," Nash says, slinging an arm around the girl's shoulders and pulling her against his side. She looks surprised, but happy. Nick can't blame her, but his stomach sinks at the sight. Nash leans in and says in Nick's ear, "She said she's with a few friends. You can dance with one of them."

"I don't dance," Nick grimaces.

"Come on, for *me,"* Nash pleads, and then he bats his lashes at Nick. He claps a hand on Nick's shoulder. "I asked the DJ to play Hot Stuff."

Nick huffs and rolls his eyes.

"Please," Nash says before Nick can argue. He squeezes Nick's shoulder, his thumb reaching over the edge of Nick's collar and

brushing against his skin. Another jolt.

Nick lets out a frustrated grumble. Maybe dancing with a girl will be a good distraction. He certainly fucking needs one. "Fine, but these friends better be fucking hot."

"They are," the girl assures him brightly, apparently having listened to their whole exchange. She nods for them to follow her through the crowd, and Nash loops a finger through Nick's belt loop so they don't get separated. Nick's cheeks flush hot at the feel of Nash tugging him forward, and he follows obediently, his brain blissfully empty once again.

The girl brings them to the center of the dance floor where a circle of girls are dancing happily. And, shit. Two of them are the girls from earlier. The girl Nash is with leans in and says something to them all, then immediately, the mean brunette fights her way through to get to him. She doesn't even bother greeting Nick, just presses her back flush to his body and guides his free hand to her hip. Then she starts to dance, grinding her ass against him to the rhythm of the song. It's overwhelming, but… Well, Nash wanted to do this, right? Nick looks up at him, wide eyed and a little scared. Nash gives him a tight smile as his girl- no, not *his*, just the girl he's with- does the same to him.

Nick sucks down nearly his entire drink in one long sip. He needs to stop chugging. He's already a little drunk, but he feels like he needs to be even drunker to get through this. He doesn't know the song that's playing, and he definitely doesn't want to be dancing to it. Mean Brunette is pressing herself so hard against him it's a little painful, and the heat from her body is making him sweat. He's *this* close to sneaking off for a cigarette when the song changes and Hot Stuff starts to play.

He hears Nash let out an excited whoop next to him. Nick looks over at him, and when their gazes meet, they both laugh. He watches Nash move in time to the beat, eyes trained on Nick as he sings along, both terribly and loudly.

How the fuck does he look so hot when he's doing something so goofy?

"Don't quit your day job," Nick calls to him, and Nash smacks his arm playfully.

Mean Brunette chooses that moment to turn to face Nick. She flattens herself to his chest once again and wraps her arms around his neck.

Then he feels her hand on his chin, tilting his face down to look at her. Reluctantly, Nick tears his eyes from Nash. MB smirks up at him, then she stretches up onto her toes and kisses him hard on the mouth.

Shit. He doesn't want this.

Nick freezes, eyes wide. He pulls back quickly and looks right at Nash, who's watching the pair of them with a small frown. He doesn't look mad, just… sad. It makes Nick feel sick to his stomach. He needs to get out of there right now. He needs this girl to stop touching him, and he needs some fresh air and a cigarette, and probably some water, and also maybe for Nash to touch him.

Nick extracts himself from Mean Brunette's grip and makes a beeline for the smoking patio at the back of the bar. He pushes the door open and roughly shoulders past a guy on his way out.

"Hey, asshole-"

"Oh, fuck off," Nick spits, rolling his eyes and shoving his hand roughly into his pocket. He storms over to the edge of the patio and leans against a low brick wall, setting his near empty drink down on top of it.

"What's your fucking problem?" a guy demands, and Nick sighs and looks up. He's bloated and red, a vein protruding from his shiny forehead. His head and hands are small, but his muscles are so huge and pumped in a way that makes him look like his skin is too tight. He's grinding his teeth and stomping over to Nick, his disproportionately tiny hands fisted at his sides. He's flanked by two slightly less puffy friends. *Great.* He found the roided-out assholes in one shot.

Nick pulls out a cigarette and sticks it between his teeth. "Listen, you don't wanna do this with me," he says as he flicks his lighter.

"Yes the fuck I do," the little hands guy seethes, getting up in Nick's face. "You think you can strut around here like you own the place? You think you can just shove me and walk away without consequences?"

Nick takes a drag of his cigarette and blows it in the guy's face. He shrugs indifferently, but his heart is racing, his (large) palms are sweating, and he can already feel the adrenaline coursing through him. Honestly, a fight is exactly what he needs.

"Say something, fucker," the guys spits. He's practically purple now. He might actually have a heart attack if he tries to fight Nick.

Not Nick's problem.

Nick straightens off the brick wall. "You said there are consequences," he says around his cigarette, hands outstretched expectantly. "Show me."

Baby Hands lets out a string of incoherent curses and pushes Nick hard in the chest. Nick steadies himself with a step back. He's stuck between the guy and the wall. He's not worried about getting hit— the guy is way too bulky to be fast enough to get him. But the wall only goes up to his ass, and if the guy keeps crowding him, he'll topple over it, and that's just fucking embarrassing. In an attempt to gain some ground, he shoves the guy back. Baby Hands wobbles, but he gains his footing swings at him. Nick ducks, cigarette still hanging from his lips. When he straightens, Baby Hands swings again, and Nick barks a laugh.

"Slow motherfucker," Nick goads, a wild grin on his face. "Put those tiny little hands to work. Come on, try harder."

The man snaps. Nick sees the change in his face. His eyes go dead and he's gritting his teeth together so hard that he might crack his jaw. He swings again, but this time, he doesn't go for Nick's face like he's expecting. Instead, he punches him right in the stomach. Nick groans. It doesn't feel good, obviously, but Nick can take it.

Nick straightens and spits his cigarette onto the ground. He grinds it out with his toe. Alright, enough fucking around.

Nick has his arm poised to throw a jab when he's yanked to the side by the collar of his shirt.

Of fucking course. He feels like he just got edged. He lets out a frustrated growl as he's shoved back against the door that leads into the bar.

"Hey!"

It's Nash. *Oh, thank fuck.* He's holding Nick by the chin with one hand, and he has his other arm pressed across his chest, holding him to the door. "Look at me."

Nick does. He finds familiar big brown eyes, full lips, the thin little

scar on his cheek. Nick clenches and unclenches his fists at his sides, his breathing ragged, but he instantly feels calmer. Nash's tight grip on his face, the weight of him pressing Nick to the door, it all helps. It's grounding. "You can't fight this fucker. You'll go to jail."

"But he-"

"No," Nash says firmly. He tightens his hold on Nick's chin when he notices his eyes darting back towards Little Baby Hands. "*Jail,* Nick."

Nick's caveman brain purrs at the sound of his name from Nash's lips.

"I didn't bust my ass carrying you through boot camp to have you throw it all away just for the chance to punch this piece of shit."

Nick blinks at him. He nods, and Nash slides his hand down to rest at the base of Nick's neck. Nash raises his brows in question, as if making *very sure* that Nick won't do anything stupid, and Nick nods again. Nash gives him an affectionate squeeze that has Nick blushing.

Little Baby Hands lets out an obnoxious laugh behind them, and Nash spins to look at him. He reaches back to grip Nick tightly by the wrist.

"Yeah, down, boy," says Little Itty Bitty Baby Hands, sneering at Nick over Nash's shoulder. Then, he focuses on Nash. "You keep your bitch on a tight leash, don't you?"

Nick grinds his teeth together.

"Shut the fuck up," Nash says, his grip on Nick tightening.

"Why, is he sensitive?" Little Itty Bitty Teeny Tiny Baby Hands says. "Needs his boyfriend to fight his battles for him?"

Nash lets go of him. Before Nick can even move, Baby Hands is flat on his back on the ground.

"You little shit," hisses one of Baby Hands' puffy lackeys.

"Oh fuck," Nick breathes, eyes wide and heart pounding once again—for a different reason now. He looks at Nash, who's grimacing and shaking his hand out, then down at the man on the ground. Blood pours from his nose like a faucet. He's out cold.

"We gotta go," Nick says. He grabs Nash by the elbow, yanks him over the back wall of the smoking patio, and takes off running down the narrow alleyway they find themselves in. They're not being followed.

The other guys are to bulky and slow to even try. But still, Nick wants to put as much distance between them as possible in case they try to have the cops track them down. Eventually, they round a corner that spits them out onto a busy sidewalk. They slip into the crowd, trying to look nonchalant as they catch their breath. Eventually, Nash slows to a stop.

"Fuck," Nash wheezes. He looks down at his hand. "I'm bleeding." He glances around at the street around them. They're surrounded by bars and gift shops, and there are people everywhere. Nick can hear live music coming from at least three different directions, and everyone around him seems to be drunk. They must be on Broadway. Seems like it might be fun under different circumstances.

Nash wanders over to a cab waiting on the side of the road.

"What are you doing?" Nick asks as Nash pulls open the door.

"Going to the hospital," Nash says as if it's obvious.

Nick rolls his eyes. "You don't need to go to the hospital. I can fix it." He ducks into the cab before Nash and tells the driver the address of their hotel. Nash gives a reluctant huff, but he climbs in after Nick regardless.

The ride back is quiet, and Nick can't stop stealing glances over at Nash.

The first time he looks over, Nash is looking down at his hand. It's bloody and bruised, but it doesn't look broken. He can move his fingers, at least, which is impressive on its own. Nash was always a good fighter back at boot camp, but Nick had no idea he was capable of *that*. He knocked that big motherfucker out with one hit. It was…

Who's he kidding? It was *so* fucking hot.

The second time Nick looks over at Nash, he's looking out the window, his forehead resting against the glass, hand resting gingerly on his knee. Nick wonders what he's thinking about. If he's as amped up as Nick is. If his hand hurts a lot. If he's pissed at Nick for ruining their night out.

The third time, Nash is looking back at him. He gives Nick a small, lopsided smile. So not mad, then. Then he nudges Nick with his knee, and Nick knows how tonight's gonna go. He's too hopped up on adrenaline, too drunk off the long islands, too turned on from Nash's

outburst. It's inevitable. He might as well come to terms with it now.

And listen, if you *really* think about it, it's actually kind of perfect.

Nick knows Nash wants him. The fucking looks have made that abundantly clear. And Nick can admit that he wants Nash back. And, well, they're sharing a hotel room, so that's just efficient, and it's not like they'll be at Lejeune together, so they don't really have to worry about anyone seeing them together and catching on. Nick can just… get it all out of his system now, then go to SOI and forget it ever happened. Honestly, it would be stupid of them *not* to hook up. Nick can't believe he ever thought it would be a bad idea.

When the cab dumps them out at the Butt Sex Resort, Nick ducks into the lobby and asks the front desk pervert for a first aid kit and some superglue. He obliges, but not without offering to play doctor with Nick. Nick politely declines (threatens to superglue his butt cheeks shut) and dashes back to the room before one of the many leather clad men playing pool can rope him into a game.

As soon as Nick is back in the room, he strips out of Nash's clothes and pulls on his sweatpants. Then, he meets Nash in the bathroom, where he's running his hand under cold water.

Nash looks up when he hears Nick enter, gaze stuttering on Nick's bare chest. "You changed."

"Didn't wanna get blood on your clothes."

Nash smirks. "Right."

Nick takes a breath. He needs to get a grip. He has has a job to do here. "Sit," he says, nodding to the toilet.

Nash closes the lid and takes a seat. Nick settles between him and the sink, leaning back against it and reaching forward to take Nash's hand in his. He's careful as he lifts it to his face to get a closer look, his own fingers brushing over Nash's bruised knuckles gingerly.

It doesn't look *that* bad up close. It's definitely not broken, but his knuckles are split and swollen, and it'll probably hurt pretty badly for a few days.

"I can't believe you did that," Nick murmurs as he digs into the first aid kit with his free hand. He pulls out some alcohol wipes and tears the pack open with his teeth. Nash hisses in pain as Nick wipes his

hand clean, and Nick distracts him with a smirk. "You knocked a guy out for me."

Nash shrugs. "He was fucking with my boy. I did what I had to do."

Nick feels himself blush from head to toe. He breathes a weak laugh. "You talked me off a ledge, too. Thanks for that."

"I've gotten pretty good at that, huh?" Nash muses, smiling up at him.

Nick huffs. He tosses the alcohol wipe into the trash and pops the cap off the superglue.

"What?" Nash asks.

"Nothing," Nick mumbles, gluing the worst of his cuts together.

"I don't believe you," Nash says, and Nick makes the mistake of looking into his eyes again. He swears whoever coined the term "bedroom eyes" had to've been looking at Nash when they came up with it, because god fucking damn.

"You can't look at me like that," he murmurs.

"Why not?" Nash asks, smirking up at him. God, of course he fucking knows what he's doing.

"Cause I need to finish this and I can't focus with you making fuck me eyes at me," Nick says, and Nash barks a laugh.

"Oh, is *that* what I'm doing?"

"*Yes!"* Nick exclaims. "All the fucking time! You look up at me with your pretty fucking doe eyes and bat your stupid lashes at me and get me to do whatever you want. It's fucked."

Nash scoffs. "You're so full of shit."

"I'm not," Nick says, rolling his eyes. He gives a humorless laugh. "Haven't you noticed that I can't fucking say no to you? It's making me lose my mind. I can't-"

"Slovacek," Nash says, and Nick shuts up. Nash stands, plucks the medical supplies from Nick's hands, and dumps them carelessly into the sink.

"Nick," he whispers. "Call me Nick."

"*Nick,"* Nash says, his voice low and soft.

Nick swallows hard. His heart's about to burst through his chest. His hands are trembling and he feels like he could run a fucking marathon. He sucks in a shaky breath and whispers, "Tell me you want me to kiss you. *Please."*

Nash takes Nick by the chin and pins him under his gaze. "I want you to kiss me."

Fuck. Nick lunges forward and kisses Nash.

It's *way* better than their first kiss. There's no hesitation from either of them. Nick grabs Nash by the waist and pulls him flush against his chest, immediately slipping his hands under Nash's shirt and running them up his strong back. Nash slides his good hand around to grip the back of Nick's neck. He parts his lips, letting Nick lick into his mouth and giving a fucking delicious moan when Nick sucks on his lower lip. He needs *more*.

Nick slots his leg between Nash's. He grabs Nash by the ass with both hands and tugs him as close as he can possibly get. Nick is already hard as a fucking rock, but so is Nash. Nick can feel it against his leg, and he can't hold back his smirk as Nash grinds against him helplessly. He buries his face in the crook of Nick's neck and lets out a whimper when Nick pushes his own hips back against him.

"Fuck," Nash moans, his breath hot against Nick's neck as they roll their hips together. He presses a messy, open mouthed kiss to the spot. "I've been dying to do this for fucking days."

Nash licks a stripe up Nick's neck, all the way to his ear, then takes the lobe between his teeth and tugs. Nick cries out. His cock twitches dangerously. He can already feel precome soaking his sweats.

"Christ. I'm gonna come in my fucking pants if you don't quit that."

"Do it," Nash says breathlessly. He sucks a bruise into the sensitive skin just below Nick's ear, then nips at his jaw. "We can just go again. We have all week."

Well. He doesn't need to be told twice. Nick shoves a hand between them. He undoes Nash's fly and shoves his jeans down to his ankles, then grabs a handful of his ass again, squeezing indulgently. They rut against each other in the bathroom, fluorescent lights blinding, echoes of their ragged breaths bouncing off the tiles. Nash in his plaid boxers

and Nick in his clingy sweatpants, red and sweaty and letting out needy, choked off moans. The sink creaks ominously with every thrust of their hips, but they ignore it. The stupid thing could break off the wall and flood the bathroom and they'd still keep going. Nick noses at Nash's cheek until he turns and kisses him again, hard and desperate. Nick can feel the heat of his orgasm pooling in his core when Nash lets out a muffled moan against his lips.

"I'm gonna- I'm- Shit, *Nick,* I'm coming—"

And if that isn't the hottest thing Nick has ever heard.

Nash's hips stutter. He presses his forehead to Nick's, his mouth falling open as he looks down between them. Nick keeps thrusting, right on the edge himself, until the sight of Nash's come seeping through his boxers sends him fully over the edge.

"Oh, fuck," Nick groans as he comes. He buries his face in Nash's neck and lets out a breathless laugh. Nash holds him there with his good hand.

"Shit, that was hot," Nash laughs, and Nick laughs again, louder this time.

They stay like that for a moment. Nash massages Nick's scalp while they let their heart rates slow and catch their breath. He thinks he could stay like that forever, but too soon, Nash murmurs, "Hey."

Nick looks up at him. He looks so good. Cheeks flushed, eyes wide and playful, lips swollen.

"Kiss me," Nash says.

And Nick does.

Chapter End Notes

things r happening :-)

listen nash is wearing a sweater vest in the cool 90's eric matthews way not the dorky way
and slovacek knows what ralph lauren is because his cousin's buddy's brother sells knock offs on canal street

Chapter 4: Love to love you baby

Chapter Summary

oops all smut ¯_(ツ)_/¯

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nash

It's not lost on Isaiah that the first time he hooked up with Nick, he stopped kissing him as soon as he came. Now here they are, come cooling and drying in their pants, tangled up in each other and making out lazily against the bathroom sink. He can't stop the doubt from seeping in, though. Maybe Nick's only still kissing him because he wants to come again. Maybe he's drunker than Isaiah realizes. Maybe he can just see how desperate Isaiah is for it and he's doing him a favor.

Isaiah's mind keeps replaying their conversation from the car.

We're boys…Aren't we?

Tonight had definitely proven that they are. Which is great, Isaiah thinks. *But.*

That's not all they are, right?

"You made me ruin my only pants," Nick murmurs against Isaiah's lips. He pulls back for a moment, their foreheads resting together, then buries his face in the side of Isaiah's neck and kisses him some more. Sweet and lingering, sticking to his skin like caramel. Nick doesn't bite, but Isaiah can feel teeth gently grazing against his skin. It gives him goosebumps.

Nick kisses his way up to Isaiah's jaw, then back down to the collar of his shirt. Isaiah's resting between his legs, Nick's hands holding him loosely by the hips, his thumbs tucked under Isaiah's shirt and rubbing little circles on his skin. The tenderness of it all makes Isaiah's head spin. It's so… confusing. Not bad, not by any means. But Isaiah has no idea where he stands, and he's so absolutely terrified to ask and burst

this comfortable, horny bubble that they're in.

So, he just goes with it. Isaiah lets his head fall back, stretching his throat to give Nick easier access. *Please leave a mark. Please leave a mark. Please leave a fucking mark.*

"I didn't *make* you do anything," Isaiah says breathlessly.

"Yes you did," Nick says. The way his words vibrate through Isaiah's throat and the rough scratch of his five o'clock shadow make him shiver. God damn. Isaiah's always loved when people are touchy with him, but he's never reacted to someone like *this*. It's thrilling. Another soft kiss to the base of his throat has him flushing from head to toe, and when Nick runs his tongue all the way up to his chin, Isaiah lets out a low moan. "You told me to come in my pants."

"Ok," Isaiah huffs, "well, I thought maybe you might use your critical thinking skills and pull them down a little or something."

Nick tugs at the neckline of Isaiah's shirt, then presses his lips to his collarbone. Isaiah is pretty sure his brain is melting. He wonders what would happen if he didn't bring Nick to SOI. If he barricaded them both in this shady sex dungeon so they could just do *this* some more. They'd probably get arrested, right? Nick definitely would. Maybe Isaiah would be, too, for aiding and abetting or something. But maybe they'd get to share a cell, and Isaiah's pretty sure it's a lot cooler to be gay in prison than it is in the military—

"How the fuck did you expect me to think critically when you were rubbing against me like that?"

And… yeah, fair.

"Fine," Isaiah says with a smirk. "I won't do it again."

Nick jolts upright, suddenly very lucid. Isaiah's *almost* upset at the sudden loss of contact, but then he sees the look of pure indignation on Nick's face. "Now hold on, let's not get ahead of ourselves—"

Isaiah laughs. "This place might have a laundry service. We can ask the front desk about it."

"And give that pervert our jizz stained pants? Not fucking happening," Nick grumbles, tugging at Isaiah's vest. He rolls his eyes as he allows Nick to pull it, along with the t-shirt he has underneath, up and over his head. Nick leans forward, presumably to tease at Isaiah's nipple

with his tongue.

"He's not a pervert. He's harmless," Isaiah says, and Nick freezes only an inch from his chest. *Dammit*. Isaiah scoots closer, but Nick yanks his head back.

"He told me he'd let me give him a prostate exam, Nash," Nick says, and Isaiah raises a brow at him.

"So *that's* why it took you so long to get the first aid kit."

Nick shoves him. "Fuck off."

Isaiah snickers. "If he freaks you out that bad, I'll ask him," he says, then he runs a hand over Nick's hair. It's longer than he's seen it since their arrival at boot camp, but still not long enough to tug or run his fingers through. It's softer than it looks, though. And isn't that just fucking poetic?

Nick scoffs. "Why? You wanna give him a prostate exam?"

A broad smile stretches across Isaiah's face. "You jealous or something?"

He knows it's probably toxic, but the thought of a jealous Slovacek sends a hot rush straight to his core. Isaiah might be a little toxic himself, if he's being honest. He *did* just knock a guy out for Nick.

Nick's mouth falls open. "I- wha-I- *No!"* he splutters, and Isaiah can't stop grinning. Nick shoves him again. "Shut the fuck up."

"I didn't say anything," Isaiah says. Nick narrows his eyes at him, but doesn't argue. Just makes that frustrated little grumbly noise Isaiah's quickly growing very fond of.

"We can worry about it tomorrow," Isaiah says. He glances over his shoulder at the shower, then shimmies out of the rest of his clothes. "Let's just clean off and go to bed."

Nick gives an affirmative kind of grunt. "Let me wrap your hand first. You should try and keep the glue dry."

Nick digs through the mess of first aid paraphernalia in the sink and pulls out a wad of little cotton squares and some teal pre-wrap. He covers Isaiah's busted knuckles with the cotton and wraps it up snugly.

"Alright. S'all good." Nick pats the back of Isaiah's hand gently.

Isaiah gives him a sly half smirk. "What, no kiss?"

"Kiss my fuckin' ass," Nick says, unable to hold back his smile. He slaps Isaiah on the ass, the sharp crack of skin against skin echoing through the bathroom. Isaiah yelps and jumps. "Get in the shower, Apollo."

"Don't think I've ever seen this Rocky movie," Isaiah muses as he turns on the water. Behind him, Nick kicks off his sweatpants.

"No?" he asks, raising a brow at Isaiah. "I'll give you a recap. Maybe we can make a sequel."

And then he fucking *winks* and saunters past Isaiah to get into the shower. Isaiah almost trips over the edge of the bath in his haste to follow.

It's strictly business at first. They take turns under the shower head rinsing themselves, and Isaiah watches hungrily as Nick gives himself a good lather with the hotel body wash. When Nick stretches up to wash his armpits, Isaiah realizes just how badly he wants to bury his face in them. He restrains himself, though, because he's new to this whole *'hooking up with a man'* thing and he's pretty sure that's not exactly standard behavior.

"Stop staring," Nick murmurs, but his voice is amplified in the small space. He's looking at Isaiah with heavy lidded eyes and a lazy half smile that tell him he'd actually prefer him to keep staring, and to maybe touch.

"Really?" Isaiah asks, raking his eyes over Nick's body. It's a *very* good body. He lets himself look in a way that he was never able to at boot camp. Takes in Nick's broad shoulders, his strong, solid chest, his muscular thighs. Isaiah tries to peek around to get a good look at his ass, but Nick turns so its out of his view, a mischievous grin on his face. And god, even his face has Isaiah flustered. His cheeks are pink from the heat of the shower and the mark that Isaiah left on his neck is already blooming deep red. Dark eyes, normally narrowed in an intimidating glower, are bright and playful as Isaiah groans in protest.

"You're one horny motherfucker," Nick teases, and Isaiah's jaw drops. "You're as bad as the front desk pervert. You think he's harmless cause you guys are two peas in a fuckin' pod."

"I am *not!"* Isaiah argues, but he doesn't have much of a leg to stand on since he's already half hard again just from looking at Nick.

"Yeah? Prove it," Nick says, and his expression turns dangerous. "Show me you can restrain yourself."

Isaiah gapes at him. "Are you serious?"

"Dead fuckin' serious," Nick says. "No touching till we're out of the shower. Me *or* yourself."

Good lord.

"That's evil. You're evil," Isaiah says. And it *is* evil, but it also sounds so incredibly hot that he can't say no. He has to at least pretend to put up a fight, though.

Nick gives him a smug smirk in response. "Don't think you can do it?"

Isaiah scoffs. "Of course I can do it."

Nick holds his hands out as if to say *prove it, then.* Doesn't even open his mouth to respond. Just quirks a brow at Isaiah and suddenly, his valiant plans to put up a fight are flushing themselves down the toilet. Damn. Isaiah really needs to work on his pride.

"Fine," he says with gritted teeth. "Deal. But when I win, I want a reward."

"When you win," Nick laughs. "We can talk about that *if* it happens."

"Fine. But it *will* happen," Isaiah grumbles.

"Sure it will. Come on, let me help you so you don't get your hand all wet," Nick says, beckoning him closer. Isaiah frowns at him.

"No. You said no touching. Are you trying to trick me or something?"

"I said *you* can't touch," Nick says, and somehow, he looks even more smug than before. "I didn't say anything about *me* touching."

Isaiah narrows his eyes at him. "Shady bastard."

"Unless you don't want my help," Nick says, holding his hands up in surrender. "If you don't think you can handle it-"

"No, no, by all means," Isaiah says with an impatient huff. "Do your worst. Asshole."

Nick starts with a softball. He squirts some of Isaiah's shampoo into

his hands and massages it into his scalp. It's not exactly erotic, but it feels really good, and Isaiah can't help the little sigh he lets out as Nick digs his fingers in.

"You like that?"

"Now you're just being cruel," Isaiah says breathlessly. He squeezes his eyes shut as Nick rinses the shampoo from his hair.

Nick barks a loud laugh. "I'm just getting started, baby."

Isaiah clenches his jaw as Nick helps him lather up his body, taking his sweet time thumbing over his nipples, tracing the lines between his abs, squeezing his ass. He sucks in a ragged breath as Nick drags his nails down his back. Then, he takes Isaiah by the hips and spins him around so he's facing the shower wall. Isaiah groans inwardly and steels himself for whatever sexual torture Nick has in store for him.

Nick sidles up right behind Isaiah, pressing their bodies flush together, back to chest. Isaiah inhales sharply as he feels Nick's hard cock slide against him. He splays his hand flat against Isaiah's stomach and pulls them even closer together, but it still doesn't feel close enough. Isaiah wants to feel Nick's weight on top of him, crushing him against the mattress or the couch or the floor. Even the sticky counter in the kitchenette. Wherever, really. Isaiah's not picky. He just wants to feel surrounded.

"Oh my god," Isaiah breathes as the very tip of Nick's nose trails up the side of his neck.

"Feels good?" Nick asks in his ear, moving his hips against Isaiah's ass in slow, measured thrusts.

Isaiah lets out an embarrassingly needy whine and Nick tightens his grip on him. He has one hand squeezing Isaiah by the hip, the other still pressed against his stomach, just below his belly button, but not quite low enough to brush against anything important. It's so. Fucking. Frustrating.

"Bet it would feel better if you touched yourself."

"Fuck you," Isaiah hisses. He reaches in front of him and grips the little plastic bars of a shelf embedded in the shower wall. It hurts his bad hand, but he needs them out of the way before his resolve snaps and he grabs himself. Honestly, he's really glad he came only a few minutes before this, or else he probably would've shot off into thin air

by now. That might not be against their stupid rules, but it would be absolutely humiliating.

"You wish," Nick laughs. He slides a hand up Isaiah's chest and pinches his nipple. Isaiah cries out, his back bowing and head falling back. Nick takes the opportunity to plant his lips on Isaiah's neck, marking him up in the way that he's been so fucking desperate for. It takes everything in Isaiah not to rip his hands from the wall and hold Nick there until he covers the whole side of his neck in angry purple blotches. He doesn't do it, though, because he's gonna win this stupid fucking competition.

Behind him, Nick picks up his pace, sliding his hard dick against Isaiah's back, letting it drag between his cheeks. One particularly rough thrust makes Isaiah suck in a sharp breath and stumble. Nick catches him before he falls forward, then he peels himself off of Isaiah's back. He hears Nick pop the cap of something, and then his hand is between Isaiah's thighs, soaping him up.

"What're you doing?" Isaiah asks, looking over his shoulder at Nick.

"Was gonna fuck between your thighs," Nick says. When he looks up, he looks dazed. His face is bright red and his pupils are huge. He blinks, his gaze briefly falling to Isaiah's lips, then down to what he can only assume is the mark on his neck. "That ok? I can do something-"

"No, yeah," Isaiah says, nodding avidly. "Yeah, that's- uh. That sounds good. Just, um... tell me what to do?"

Nick nods back at him. Before Isaiah can turn back around, Nick steals a kiss. It's quick and, in comparison to everything else they've done tonight, chaste. He turns around and braces himself before Nick can see his goofy grin.

"Tell me if you want me to stop," Nick says. Isaiah nods, and then Nick takes him by the hip again, maneuvering him until they're both in the right position. Then, finally, he feels Nick guiding his hard cock between his legs.

"Ok, um, squeeze your legs together. But not too tight." Isaiah does as Nick says, and then hears him suck in a shaky breath. His head falls to rest against the base of Isaiah's neck.

"Good?" Isaiah asks, and Nick nods against him.

"Good," he confirms aloud, his voice hoarse and wrung out. He presses a kiss to to Isaiah's spine, then starts moving.

Isaiah lets out a gasp as the tip of Nick's erection brushes against his balls.

"Ok?" Nick asks, pausing his movement.

"Yes, ok, good," Isaiah says, voice strained. He tilts his hips back, desperate for friction. "Don't fucking stop."

Nick thrusts again, and this time, he doesn't stop. Isaiah doesn't know if this is better or worse. He's somehow simultaneously over and understimulated. He's aching for relief, his painfully hard cock leaking onto the shower floor with each *almost* satisfying touch. He leans forward and buries his face in the crook of his outstretched arm. The new angle allows for more contact, but the rhythmic slide against the base still isn't enough. Isaiah lets out a low, frustrated groan.

"Nick," he breathes. "You're fucking killing me."

"Do you forfeit?"

Isaiah huffs. Does he? He was gonna ask for a blowjob if he won. Even if he does manage to hold out, he'll blow his load as soon as Nick's mouth is on him. And it's not like this was a fair fight to begin with. Nick duped him. He just wants Isaiah to beg for it. And… well, Isaiah kind of wants to beg for it.

"Fuck it. Yes. Touch me. *Please,* Nick," Isaiah pleads, and Nick's hand is wrapped around him before he's even done speaking. He lets out a moan that almost certainly tears through the entire shady hotel. He should be embarrassed, but he's too far gone to care. Besides, it makes Nick laugh.

"Jesus," Nick says. He plants a kiss on Isaiah's shoulder, and he can feel Nick smiling. He's been doing that a lot tonight. Isaiah tries not to let it go to his head. "It's barely been five minutes."

"Lasted longer than you would've," Isaiah says through gritted teeth. Nick doesn't say anything in reply, he just bites down on the spot he kissed moments before. *"Ah,* fuck."

"I'm close," Nick pants, and suddenly he's thrusting hard between Isaiah's legs, stroking him in time with his hips. Isaiah's own orgasm hits him like a brick wall. He barely he even realizes it's happening

until he comes hard into Nick's fist with another loud moan.

"Oh, shit," Isaiah breathes. He reaches back to run his good hand over Nick's damp hair. He massages his scalp, and as he does so, he feels Nick's hips stutter against him. He spills between Isaiah's thighs with a rumbling moan of his own, then collapses against Isaiah's back.

"Fuck."

"Yeah," Isaiah laughs.

Nick gives his shoulder another quick kiss before stepping back and rinsing the pair of them off. "You lost," he teases.

"Did I really?" Isaiah muses as Nick kills the water. They both get out of the shower and Nick tosses him a towel.

"Yes," Nick says as he dries himself off. He grins at Isaiah. "*You* lost and *I* won."

"Yeah, whatever," Isaiah says with an eye roll, but he can't fight his smile.

Nick tosses his wet towel on the bathroom floor and walks back out into the cottage ass naked and completely shameless. Isaiah dries himself off and hangs the wet towel back on the rack, because his mother would kill him if she saw him leave it on the ground. He follows after Nick and makes a beeline for his suitcase. He digs through it haphazardly, searching for some boxers and a pair of pajamas. He feels like he's in a daze. He's definitely still a little drunk, and he's probably lightheaded from being in a hot shower for so long, but there's something else, too. His stomach is fluttering and he's still smiling.

He supposes that's what coming twice in the span of thirty minutes will do to a guy.

"What are you doing?" Nick asks. When Isaiah looks up, Nick's staring at him, brow furrowed. He's already made himself comfortable in bed, stretched out on his back with his arms folded behind his head.

Isaiah blinks at him. "Pajamas."

Nick wrinkles his nose. "I just made you come twice, and now you're gonna torture me by putting fuckin' clothes back on? I knew you were an asshole, but that's just cruel."

"You're one to talk," Isaiah laughs, but he gives up on his search and makes his way over to the bed. For a moment, he feels a little self conscious about it. He almost cups himself in his hand to hide his now soft, but very satisfied, dick. But then he sees the way Nick is openly staring at him, fingers idly trailing up and down his hairy chest and stomach, his smile sleepy and content, and Isaiah doesn't care anymore.

Isaiah settles into the bed. The second he's under the covers, Nick pulls him into his arms and clings to him like he wants to crawl into his skin.

"You're touchy tonight," Isaiah says. Touchy might not be the best word. Sweet would be better, or affectionate. But he doesn't think Nick would appreciate being called those things. Too gay, probably.

"S'the tequila," Nick murmurs, then presses a barely there kiss to the back of Isaiah's neck.

Isaiah laughs, and he can feel Nick smiling against his skin again. It's quickly becoming his favorite sensation. "Maybe I'll get us a bottle."

There's a comfortable silence. The only sound is Nick's steady breathing and the stirring of fabric as he draws tiny figure eights on Isaiah's hip beneath the sheets.

Then, loud and grating and unwelcome in his brain: *We're boys, aren't we?*

Isaiah winces.

"Can I ask you something?" he asks softly. He needs to know. He needs to ask now while he has the nerve and he's too exhausted to get distracted by his own horniness. Otherwise, he'll just be making himself sick for the rest of the trip. Behind him, he hears the pillowcase rustle as Nick nods, feels the tip of his nose rubbing against his spine. "This isn't, like… You're not just doing this because you owe me or something? Or you feel bad?"

"What?" Nick stops drawing on Isaiah's skin and scoots back. Isaiah rolls over to look him in the eye and finds him wearing a concerned frown.

Isaiah grimaces and tugs the blankets tight around his shoulders. Maybe this was a bad idea. But it's too late now, he's already said too much to brush it off. "You just… Well, you said you did that thing for

Hicks because he's your boy. And I just— you don't owe me for knocking that asshole out, you know. I don't want you to do this if you're just doing it because of that."

Nick scoffs. "No, Nash. Absolutely fuckin' not."

"You told me you can't say no to me," Isaiah says, his voice small and quiet, and something in Nick's expression crumbles.

"Yeah, because I wanna make you feel good, not because…" Nick huffs, trailing off. He blushes bright pink and turns his attention to something across the room, his hand flying to his chain. He tugs at it. *"Fuck.* Um… You remember those girls at the bar I said wanted drugs?"

Isaiah nods, unsure of where he's going with this.

"They didn't want drugs."

"Ok," Isaiah says, brows knitted together.

Nick is quiet for a moment. There's a pained look on his face and he's wrapped his chain so tightly around the tip of his finger that it's starting to turn purple. Isaiah grabs his hand in an attempt to get him to stop. It works— Nick unravels his finger. Isaiah makes to pull away, but Nick grabs him by the wrist. Carefully, with a sigh that's more like a hum, Nick threads their fingers together. He holds Isaiah's hand to his chest like it's something precious.

"They wanted to have a threesome with me," Nick finally admits. Isaiah's brows fly to his hairline.

"What!?" he demands, his heart dropping into his stomach. He clears his throat. *Get it together, idiot.* "Um. How'd you manage to blow that?"

"I, uh… I told them to fuck off," Nick says sheepishly.

Oh.

Isaiah blinks at him. "Why would you do that?"

Nick looks pained. He rolls onto his back and stares up at the mirrored ceiling, his gaze focused on his own grimace reflected back to him. He untangles their fingers and flattens Isaiah's palm against his chest, resting his hand on top. Isaiah can feel his heart hammering away just beneath their hands.

"Don't make me say it," he says weakly. "Please, Isaiah."

It's about as close to confirmation as he'll get from Nick that he turned down a fucking *threesome* with two hot girls to hang out with Isaiah. His heart is in his throat, and for a moment, he can't breathe.

Isaiah wants to say something. He *should* say something. But what? Everything he's thinking feels like too much. Too real. Too soon. But Nick is being so vulnerable that Isaiah has to give *something* back.

"You know, when you were kissing that girl on the dance floor, I wanted to throttle you," he finally says, and Nick snorts.

"Should've. That would've been hot," Nick says. "Probably would've dragged you to the bathroom and gotten you off right there."

Somehow, miraculously, Isaiah's dick twitches with interest. "In the bar bathroom?

"Wouldn't be the weirdest place I've ever hooked up," Nick muses.

"Where is?" Isaiah asks because he wants to lighten the mood, and also because he's been dying to know since it came up at boot camp. At the time, he thought it was odd that obnoxious, dick-swinging Slovacek hadn't contributed to that conversation. Now he wonders if there was a reason he kept quiet.

Nick gives a thoughtful hum. He wraps an arm around Isaiah and drags him closer, until he's resting his head on Nick's chest. Isaiah doesn't complain. He just makes himself comfortable, head tucked just under Nick's chin, a leg slung across him. He knows he shouldn't get used to this, but he could. Easily. Honestly, he might already be.

"Probably the walk-in at the restaurant I used to work at," Nick says.

"Like, the freezer?" Isaiah asks, wrinkling his nose. Nick breathes a laugh.

"Yeah. It was fuckin' cold," he says. "Almost too cold for me to finish. But I managed."

"That must've been so hard for you," Isaiah deadpans, rolling his eyes. Nick laughs again, louder this time, and Isaiah can feel it rumble through his own body. Damn, he loves it.

"Mm. Hard for someone else, too," Nick teases, and Isaiah can hear the

way he's grinning.

"Shut up," Isaiah laughs, pathetically stamping out the embers of jealousy burning in his gut. He has no right. This happened way before he and Nick ever met, and they're not even together! But he can't help it.

But *also*, he needs to know how it went down.

"So what happened?" he asks. "How'd you even end up in that scenario?"

"I was working in the kitchen at this little hole in the wall place before boot camp," Nick explains. "I, um… I was hooking up with someone else that worked there. We used to come in early together on Thursdays to do prep before the place opened. I remember it was really fuckin' hot that day and the pizza oven made the AC basically useless, so we kept taking breaks in the walk-in, and it just kind of… happened."

"Seems unsanitary," Isaiah says, because he has nothing kind or productive to add.

"Fuck off," Nick laughs. "It's not like we got jizz on the food. It all got, um, swallowed."

"You wash your hands after?" Isaiah asks through gritted teeth.

"Obviously, asshole," Nick says, then he starts laughing. "I did accidentally knock over a tub of Italian dressing, though. It got all over Gio and he-" Nick trails off and clears his throat.

Gio, then. Stupid name. Probably a huge douchebag.

"Was he, like, your boyfriend?" Isaiah asks, trying for nonchalance, but he's sure he just sounds weak.

"No," Nick says, his voice suddenly icy, his body tense. "We were..." He huffs. "We were best friends. We just used to… mess around."

"You're not friends anymore?"

"I don't wanna talk about Gio right now," Nick grumbles. Thank god, because Isaiah doesn't really either, but he's too much of a masochist to stop digging on his own accord.

Nick sighs and trails his fingers up and down Isaiah's spine. "Can you

just… tell me more things about you?"

"What do you wanna know?" Isaiah asks.

"Tell me about the church basement," Nick says, and Isaiah breathes a laugh.

"It's not that exciting of a story, but alright. It was my senior year of high school and I was there getting some of my volunteer hours done. You know how, around Christmas time, churches do those gift drives where you pick a tag off the tree and it has a wish list for a family in need?"

"Mm," Nick hums into the top of Isaiah's head.

"Well, me and this girl were making those tags. She was writing them out and I was tying the ribbons on them. It was so fucking boring and my hands were sore for, like, three days after," Isaiah explains. The girl was nice enough. He doesn't remember her name, just that he'd been disappointed to learn that he'd been paired up with her instead of his friend Chris. But Chris insisted it would be good— that the girl, apparently, had a massive crush on Isaiah, and that he should use the time to make a move on her. He didn't make a move, but it didn't even matter in the end, because the girl was way bolder than he was and took matters into her own hands.

"Anyway," he continues, "I ran out of ribbon and she needed a new pen or something, so we went down to the storage closet in the basement. I don't really remember how it started, but she ended up giving me head in there. I didn't even finish. We almost got caught when the choir director came to look for sheet music."

Nick laughs at this, and Isaiah can feel some of the tension melting out of him.

"It wasn't even a good blow job, either," Isaiah complains. He remembers the way he gripped the shelf behind him so hard that his knuckles turned white, and the way he squeezed his eyes shut and concentrated really, really hard on *staying* hard. He remembers thinking of Chris. How he couldn't wait to tell him, how he'd be so proud of Isaiah. That was the only thing that kept him from tapping her on the shoulder and asking her to please stop. How Chris's face would light up when Isaiah told him. And... *Oh.* "I dunno if that was her fault, though. I just wasn't feeling it."

After a moment's hesitation, Nick asks tentatively, "So are you not into

girls at all?"

"Apparently not," Isaiah says. "I thought I was for a while, and that maybe I was just picking the wrong ones to hook up with. But then…"

"Then I sucked your dick and rocked your world?" Nick supplies. Isaiah looks up at the ceiling and finds Nick's reflection sporting a shit eating grin.

Isaiah smirks. "No, actually, it was when I saw your buddy Bowman in the showers-"

"Oh, fuck you, Nash," Nick exclaims, and Isaiah bursts out laughing.

"He's just so big," Isaiah says dreamily, and Nick scoffs. "I want him to throw me around."

"I'll throw you around," Nick grumbles. "I'll throw you right into the fuckin' dumpster."

"You're such a bully," Isaiah says, rolling his eyes.

"Yeah, well, you're into it," Nick says. "Freak."

Isaiah bursts into laughter at that, and Nick joins in. After a moment, they collect themselves. Nick takes a deep breath and asks, "So I'm the first guy you've been with?"

"Pretty much," Isaiah says. "I kissed a guy once, but I don't count it. It was a dare and it wasn't… I dunno. Real, I guess."

They lapse into silence for a moment, and Isaiah's heart is going a mile a minute. So is his mind. Was that too much? Too feely? Did he freak Nick out? How the fuck can he salvage this?

But then, Nick asks, his voice barely above a whisper, "This is real, though?"

Isaiah's heart clenches. He swallows hard. "It is to me."

Nick doesn't say anything in response, but he tightens his hold on Isaiah and plants a kiss on the top of his head.

It's enough for tonight.

Chapter End Notes

ok so i DID remove the chapter count because i accidentally wrote nearly 5k words of porn and i couldn't fit the actual plot in without making the chapter monstrously long so there will be at least one more part to this one, maybe two depending on if i accidentally do that again. but we get a little lore drop at the end so at least there's that!

after watching the ep where they're on mess duty and seeing slovacek run that shit like it's the navy (marines) i decided there is no way that man didn't work at a restaurant at some point

anyway happy thanksgiving to my fellow americans i hope at least one of you read this in your uncles living room after gorging yourself on turkey and pie :'-)

Chapter 5: Haven't had any complaints

Chapter Summary

isaiah has ~feelings~ and does some ~self discovery~

tw for emetophobia in the first few paragraphs perhaps? slovacek is hungover but i tried to keep my descriptions non-graphic. nash hears him puke but doesn't see anything

Nash

Isaiah was hoping that the way the previous night ended would mean he wouldn't wake up to an empty bed this morning, but of course he does. He stretches his hand over to grope at the empty space and his heart sinks into his stomach. He doesn't know what he was expecting. That one good night together would be enough to change *Nick fucking Slovacek's* way of thinking? That they'd hook up again and whatever wall Nick's hiding behind would come crumbling down and he'd pour his heart out and they'd somehow live happily ever after? Yeah fucking right.

The bed is still warm, though, like Nick lingered for a while before getting up.

With a groan, Isaiah rolls into the warm spot. It still smells like him, too. Cigarettes, cheap cologne, body wash from the hotel shower. Isaiah buries his face in Nick's pillow and breathes in deep. Would it kill him to sleep in just *once?* He's always so cuddly in the middle of the night. Isaiah wants some of that when the sun's out. Surely that's not too much to ask after a night of debauchery.

Then he hears the horrific, guttural retching coming from the bathroom, and okay, maybe it actually would've killed Nick to sleep in today. Though while the sound of Nick exorcising demons into the toilet is making Isaiah nauseous, the idea that *maybe* he would've stayed in bed longer if he could've is comforting.

Isaiah rolls out of bed and grabs a pair of boxers off the ground, pulling them on without giving them a second glance. He stumbles into the kitchen, fills up a glass of water, then makes his way clumsily to the bathroom. His head aches and his hand is throbbing, but at

least he's in better shape than Nick. He knocks softly on the bathroom door. When Nick lets out a pained moan in response, he lets himself in.

Isaiah whistles at the sight before him. He leans against the doorframe causally. "Don't you look pathetic."

Nick is sprawled out on his back on the bathroom floor, ass naked, an arm draped dramatically across his forehead. He's paler than Isaiah's ever seen him— to the point of being a little gray. There's a piece of bread with two tiny nibbles taken out of it lying next to him and he's glaring up at Isaiah like he held him down and poured the long islands down his throat the night before.

"You poisoned me," Nick whines.

"I did *not,*" Isaiah scoffs, and Nick winces at the sound. "You barely ate yesterday and then you chugged your drinks. This is a problem of your own design."

"You're so mean to me," Nick says. His voice is weak and hoarse. "Way to kick a guy while he's down."

Isaiah sighs and shakes his head. He bends forward to deposit the glass of water onto the ground next to Nick.

"Will you survive if I run to CVS?" Isaiah asks, eyeing Nick warily. His eyes are red and puffy and there are used tissues sprinkled around him like filthy flower petals.

"No," Nick groans. "I'm pretty sure I'm actually dying."

"Ok, well, what would you like me to do, then?" Isaiah asks impatiently. "Should I call an ambulance? Maybe get the front desk pervert in here to help nurse you back to health?"

"Fuck no," Nick says with a grimace. He scrubs a hand over his face. "Can you just… Can you get me a blanket before you go?"

Isaiah raises a brow at him.

Nick huffs. "Please?" he adds weakly.

"Fine, sure," Isaiah says with exaggerated exasperation. If he's being totally honest with himself, he's kind of thrilled to have the chance to look after Nick while he's not feeling well. It feels so… Domestic. Real.

He leaves Nick to wallow on the bathroom floor for a moment and wanders around the cottage, frowning at the bed and the couch. The downside of accidentally booking a sex dungeon is that it isn't exactly cozy. Everything is sleek and slippery and easy to wipe clean.

Isaiah throws on a t-shirt (that may or may not be the one Nick was wearing the night before) and a pair of gym shorts. He slides on his shoes, wanders out to his car, and pops the trunk.

Jackpot.

The bin with his bedding is right in the back. He pops the lid and pulls out a fluffy throw blanket and his favorite pillow before heading back into the bathroom.

"Here," he says, tossing them both at Nick, who only groans and squeezes his eyes shut as they land on him. "Don't puke on those, please."

"Mmph."

"And try not to die."

"Mmph."

With a sigh, Isaiah leaves Nick in a heap on the bathroom floor. He doesn't feel good about it, but he won't do Nick any good just standing there and watching him yack. He finds the nearest CVS and fills a basket with saltines, Gatorade, and painkillers, then he hits the McDonald's drive-thru to get them both some salty hangover food. When he gets back to the sex dungeon, he drops his haul on the kitchen counter and ventures back into the bathroom to check on Nick.

This time, Nick is curled up with Isaiah's blanket and pillow, fast asleep. His water glass is empty and he's eaten half his slice of bread, which is a good sign, but Isaiah can't let him keep sleeping on that hard tile. He'll be sore for days.

"Hey," Isaiah says quietly, nudging Nick with his foot. Nick startles awake. He winces and looks around the bathroom frantically. When his gaze finally settles on Isaiah, he lets out a deep breath. "You think you're good to move to the bed?"

Nick nods. He eases himself into a sitting position, the blanket wrapped tightly around his shoulders, and lets Isaiah help him to his

feet. As he shuffles back to bed, Isaiah grabs the pillow, the empty glass, and the half piece of bread and follows after him. He tosses the pillow onto the bed and then wanders into the kitchen area.

"I got you some stuff," Isaiah says, watching warily as Nick crawls into bed. He chucks his silky pillow away, replaces it with Isaiah's, and slips under the sheets still wrapped in his blanket. When Nick rolls onto his side and looks up at him expectantly, it makes Isaiah's chest feel tight. "Um… How's your stomach?"

"Empty," Nick says, his voice rough and raw. "Think I'm done ralphing."

"What about your head?"

Nick smirks and some of the life returns to his eyes. It's a relief, but Isaiah braces himself for whatever bullshit is about to come out of his mouth. "Sloppy."

Isaiah pinches the bridge of his nose. "Good lord," he sighs as Nick snickers. Well, at least it's a step up from the sickly lump he found this morning. "Please be serious for one second so I can help you."

"It fuckin' hurts," Nick admits. "Please tell me you got painkillers."

"I did, but you should probably eat before you have any. You think you can handle some crackers? Or maybe a McDouble?"

Nick moans. "I could fuck up a McDouble right now. Did you really get me McDonald's?"

Isaiah laughs. "Yeah."

"God, I could fuckin' kiss you right now," Nick says, and even though Isaiah's heart flutters, he wrinkles his nose.

"Please don't," he says. "You had your head in the toilet all morning."

And even though he's typically absolutely, *vehemently* against eating in bed, Isaiah scoops up his goodies and moves to join Nick. He puts the drinks on the nightstand and dumps the rest in Nick's lap, then takes a seat next to him, his back up against the headboard. Once he's settled, Nick digs into the McDonald's bag, splitting the food between them, then empties the contents of the CVS bag onto the blankets.

"I'm never letting you talk me into taking shots again," Nick murmurs

as he shoves a fistful of fries into his mouth.

"Not my fault you can't handle your liquor," Isaiah replies, raising a brow at Nick.

"It wasn't the liquor, it was all that sugar and shit," Nick says, rolling his eyes. "I don't understand how you're functioning right now."

Isaiah shrugs. "I must just be way stronger than you."

"Yeah fuckin' right," Nick grumbles. He eats half his burger in one bite, and for some reason, that turns Isaiah on. Truthfully, though, there are few things that Nick does that don't turn Isaiah on.

After they eat, Nick downs half his Gatorade and enough ibuprofen to give a weaker man a stomach ulcer. Isaiah gets rid of their trash and wanders over to the general vicinity that the TV is hidden in. He presses on the edges of a few different mirrors before one pops open, revealing the entertainment center.

"What should we watch?"

"Frat Bros Haze Bubble Butt Recruit Until He Cries 3," Nick teases, and Isaiah fixes him with an unimpressed frown. It's honestly impressive that he still manages to be like this given the state that he was in just a few hours earlier.

"We're not watching porn," Isaiah says flatly. "And they're not recruits. They're pledges."

"Did you get hazed?" Nick asks with a smirk. Isaiah feels himself flush, and Nick's smirk grows shark-like. "You did, huh? Did you like it? Bullying gets you all hot. I bet you fuckin' loved it. Were you a good little pledge, or did you bite back like you do with me?"

God, Isaiah hates that this is working on him. The back of his neck prickles with cold sweat. He clenches his jaw, rolls his shoulders, takes a deep breath through his nose.

"Fuck off," he says finally, then he folds his arms across his chest and pins Nick with a glare. "I didn't get hazed. Like I said before, it's a respectable organization-"

"Yeah, yeah. Philosophy and all that bullshit," Nick says, rolling his eyes. "Were you *initiated*, then?"

Isaiah makes a little phone with his hand and holds it to his ear. "Hello? Front desk pervert? My friend is sick and really needs your assistance-"

"Okay," Nick laughs, holding his hands up in surrender. "I'm done. Put on your Roger Rabbit movie."

Isaiah gives him a smug sneer and snatches the VHS from the pile on the couch. He sticks it in the VCR, then as quickly as he can, turns on the TV and flips through to the right input setting. He only gets a quick glimpse of some guy's asshole before he manages to find it, and he considers that a success. He fast forwards through the previews and hits play, then joins Nick back in the bed.

They're close enough to touch should either of them reach out, but not so close that they're cuddling. Isaiah wants to curl up against Nick. Rest his head on his chest and feel his fingers trailing across his skin again, but he stays on his side of the bed, hands folded politely in his lap. They haven't touched at all today, aside from those few fleeting and unsexy moments in the bathroom earlier this afternoon. It's not like Isaiah doesn't want to. He does. *Really* badly. But they're both sober now, and for his own sanity, he needs Nick to be the one to make the first move this time.

Unfortunately for Isaiah's sanity, Nick does not make a move, and instead falls asleep fifteen minutes into the movie. He's propped up against the cushy headboard, head lolling to the side and mouth hanging open. Isaiah sighs and shakes his head. He climbs out of bed, grabs his wallet and an armful of their dirty laundry, and makes his way over to the main lobby. Might as well be productive with his alone time instead of sitting here, staring at Nick while he sleeps. Plus, Isaiah can surprise him with some warm, clean clothes when he wakes up. Because that's a nice thing to do for your friend whose armpits you kind of want to lick for some reason.

"Afternoon, gorgeous," says the front desk pervert. He very obviously ogles Isaiah, lower lip pulled between his teeth, and Isaiah can't help but wonder if this is what he looks like when he's staring at Nick. He should probably get that under control. "Your boy toy came in here like a bat out of hell last night looking for bandages. Everything good?"

"Uh, he isn't— we're not…" Isaiah huffs. "I don't have a *boy toy.*" He grimaces as he says it.

The front desk pervert— Jacob, according to his name tag— furrows his brow. "Are you not with the mean little bear cub?"

Isaiah blinks at him. What the hell is he talking about? Is that supposed to be Nick?

"I swear I saw you with him," he continues. "The guy with the sexy nose and the ass? Real easy to rile up."

Oh. Yeah, he definitely means Nick.

"Well, yeah, we're here together, but we're not, like, *together* together," Isaiah explains unnecessarily. This guy doesn't need their whole backstory, but he can't help it. It spills out of his mouth before he can stop himself. "He's, um… He's my boy. From boot camp. I don't… He doesn't…" He trails off, then sighs. "I don't fucking know, man."

Jacob snorts. "Been there, sugar." He glances at Isaiah's armful of clothes. "Need to do some laundry?"

"Yeah, can I?"

"Sure. Laundry room is right next to the bathroom. 50 cents gets you a load," he says with a wink, then he ducks beneath the desk to grab something. He holds up a little packet and dangles it. "Detergent."

Isaiah hurries over to the desk and squats down so Jacob can stick the packet on top of the pile. "Thanks."

Isaiah tracks down the laundry room, which is less of a room and more of a closet. He dumps his clothes into the machine, pours in the little detergent packet, then stares at it.

"Hmm."

Isaiah realizes with sudden clarity that he has no clue how to do laundry. His mom has always taken care of it. Even at school, he's close enough to home to bring a load home and have a nice Sunday dinner. He can't help but feel a little embarrassed. With a sigh, he shuts the lid and shoves his quarters into the quarter thing. He leans in and squints at the knobs.

Why are there so many settings? What the hell is permanent press? *Rinse?* Doesn't it do that anyway? Isaiah huffs and turns the setting to hot. Hot is good, right? Hot is clean. Boiling water makes it cleaner, so hot water should make their clothes cleaner. With a resigned shake of

his head, he pushes the start button. He's definitely thinking too much about this. How bad could it turn out?

When Isaiah makes his way back out to the lobby, he pauses. "Um. How long does it usually take?"

"Bout thirty minutes to wash, then maybe forty five in the dryer," Jacob says. Isaiah nods and glances around.

"Are you the only person who works here?"

"No," Jacob laughs. "Feels like it sometimes, but no. I just pick up a lot of extra shifts."

Isaiah nods again, his attention snagging on the vending machine. He lets himself look at what he now knows are butt plugs for ten seconds before he forces himself to turn back to Jacob. "Is this place only for, uh… gay guys?"

"Not exclusively, but that tends to be the clientele," Jacob says. "We've worked hard to build a reputation of being very discrete."

Well. Discrete is *exactly* what Isaiah needs. "You get a lot of guys in the military?"

Jacob's smile turns a little sad. "Enough to offer a discount."

Isaiah takes a deep breath. Hearing that makes him feel less alone, but it also makes him feel like shit. Is this what his sex life is doomed to become? Secret hookups in tacky hotels? *Fuck*. He gnaws on his lower lip.

"You look like you wanna talk about something," Jacob says carefully, then he nods to the bar at the back of the lobby. "Want a drink?"

Isaiah breathes a laugh. "I'm hungover."

"Hair of the dog," Jacob says with a shrug. He hops over the front desk and hurries over to the bar. "You like whiskey, sugar?"

"Yeah, sure," Isaiah sighs.

Jacob pours him a drink, then drags one of the barstools up to the front desk. He pats the seat. "Come on, take a load off."

Isaiah slides into the seat. It's a little too tall for the front desk, so his knees brush against the lip of the counter, but he can deal with it for

the time being. He takes a sip of his whiskey and winces. It's definitely not the nice stuff his parents got him, but it gets the job done.

"So," Jacob starts, looking at Isaiah expectantly. "Talk to me. Why do you look like that?"

"Like what?" Isaiah huffs.

Jacob scoffs. "Like a sad baby deer," he says as if it's obvious. Maybe it is. "Is it your boy toy?"

Isaiah wrinkles his nose. "I don't like that."

"Fine." Jacob rolls his eyes. "Your *boy* from boot camp."

"I just…" Isaiah sets his glass on the front desk. He leans forward onto his elbows and massages his temples. "I've never done anything like this before. I have no idea where he stands or what the fuck I'm doing and I'm terrified I'm gonna fuck everything up. And like, we kind of talked, but not really, but I don't even know if it matters anyway. We only have a few days left before I have to bring him to infantry training and then I have no clue when I'll see him again since I'm going back to finish school. I said I'd write, but… I dunno. I don't think it'll be enough."

"Wow," Jacob says. He gives Isaiah's glass a subtle nudge. "Seems like you might really need that."

Isaiah grunts. His eyes are stinging. He blinks and takes a long pull of his drink.

"So he's your first love?" Jacob asks, and Isaiah chokes on his whiskey. He pounds on his chest as he hacks up a lung, tears *actually* streaming down his cheeks now. Jacob cackles.

"Fuck," Isaiah wheezes, wiping his eyes. "No! Not love. God, no. Just… We're messing around."

"You sure about that?" Jacob asks, raising a knowing brow at him. "You're in here sulking about him, and he came storming in here last night demanding a first aid kit so he could take care of you. Now, I don't know him, but even to me, a complete stranger, it looked like that boy would walk barefoot across hot coals for you."

Isaiah's stomach flips. Nick's words from the night before ring through his head.

I wanna make you feel good.

He flushes at the memory.

"That's not *love* though," Isaiah insists, and he's not really sure who he's trying to convince. It's not, right? Love is romance and dates and slow dancing. Gifts and flowers and kissing in the rain or whatever. Not whatever the hell he and Nick have going on. What exactly *do* they have going on? God. Isaiah's known that he's confused, but *this* confused? He's a disaster. "That's just… He's my-"

"Your *boy,* right," Jacob says, giving him a wry smile. Why the hell does he keep saying it like that? "You have sex with all your boys?"

"I- we're not… We haven't-" Isaiah splutters. He takes another swig of his drink and manages not to choke this time. "We haven't actually had sex yet. Not, like, all the way. That… I'm also kind of freaking out about that, now that I think about it."

Isaiah wants to have sex with Nick. Like, so badly. But if he's being honest, he's completely lost on how it works between two guys. He knows the basic mechanics, obviously. But how do they even get there? How do they decide who does what? What does he even want to do?

"Now, sex is something I can help with. That's my favorite subject," Jacob says with a smirk. "Let's start from the beginning. You said you've never done this before. Do you mean that you've never been with a man?"

"I mean, we've done some things," Isaiah explains. He stares down into his drink and mutters, "We've, like, rubbed up on each other and stuff. And he sucked me off once. And he did this thing last night where he __"

Isaiah feels himself grow very hot, and Jacob looks thrilled.

"Go on," he says eagerly.

Isaiah sighs. "He fucked me between my thighs."

"Hot," Jacob muses, and Isaiah hums his agreement. "He's more experienced than you are, then?"

Isaiah nods and takes another sip of his drink, then forces himself to look up at Jacob.

"Have you done any *exploring* on your own?" Jacob asks.

"What, like-" Isaiah leans in and lowers his voice to a whisper, "sticking something up my butt?"

Jacob rolls his eyes. "If you can't talk about sex like a grown up, you probably shouldn't be having it."

Isaiah frowns. "I don't think that really counts when you're talking to a stranger."

"Oh, whatever," Jacob says, giving a dismissive wave. "Yes, I mean sticking something up your butt. Like a finger or a toy."

Isaiah's cheeks are scorching, but he keeps talking because he needs help so fucking bad. The last thing he wants is to embarrass himself in bed with Nick. "No. I mean, I've been using the bidet in our bathroom. That kinda feels nice. But I don't think that really counts."

Before Isaiah can fully comprehend the fact that he just told a virtual stranger that he likes when the toilet shoots water up his ass, Jacob asks, "Do you think your boy's a top or a bottom?"

"That's like the peg versus the hole?" Isaiah gives a crude hand gesture to demonstrate.

Jacob laughs. "Yes, sugar. The top is the peg."

Isaiah snorts. "I have no fucking clue. I don't know how to tell."

"Well, typically, you just ask," Jacob says smugly. "Like this. When *you* think about having sex with this guy, do you imagine yourself topping or bottoming?"

"Uh…" A slideshow of Isaiah's nastiest daydreams plays in his brain. In nearly all of them, he's surrounded by Nick. Crushed underneath him. Looking up at his face, brow furrowed and jaw hanging open in ecstasy, that silver chain tickling the center of Isaiah's chest. *Well.* That answers that. "Bottoming, apparently. But… It kind of freaks me out."

"You don't *have* to have penetrative sex. There are plenty of other options."

"Yeah, but I wanna try it," Isaiah says. He kind of wants to try everything with Nick.

"Well, just make sure you're prepared, then," Jacob says. When Isaiah furrows his brow, Jacob holds up two fingers and wiggles them, a playful smile on his face. He nods towards the vending machine. "We sell lube if you're feeling adventurous."

Isaiah lets out a sigh, then downs the rest of his drink in one go. He doesn't feel drunk, but the sharp pain that's been hammering away in his brain all day has started to subside, at least. He hears a buzzing sound coming from the direction of the laundry room.

"Sounds like the washer's done, and it's about time for me to go on my break," Jacob says. He picks up Isaiah's empty glass. "I'll be back in fifteen if you need anything. And just make sure you're being safe, alright? Wrap it up at all that."

Isaiah breathes a laugh. "Alright. Um, thanks. This was… weird."

Jacob waves him off. "Sugar, that wasn't even the weirdest conversation I'll have today." He gives Isaiah a cheeky wink and disappears into a room marked as staff only.

Isaiah exhales heavily and drags the stool back over to the bar, then wanders into the laundry room. He pulls the wet clothes out of the washer in one big heap and shoves them into the dryer, which he sets to high heat to dry. He hits the start button with the heel of his hand and then walks with purpose back out to the lobby.

To the vending machine.

He blushes just looking at it. God, gay sex seems so involved. There are *so* many little toys and accessories. How the hell are half of these things even used? There's an enema sandwiched between little clamps and a metal ring that's too big for a finger, but not quite big enough to be a bracelet. There are about six different types of lubes stocked along the top row, all in different flavors and touting different levels of "glide" and "silkiness." Isaiah shoves some money into the slot and punches in the number for the most standard looking one. Once it falls, he pockets it quickly and hurries back to the cottage.

Nick is still asleep when Isaiah creeps inside, but he's no longer propped up. He's slumped over onto his side and curled up with both of Isaiah's pillows- hugging one and sleeping on the other. He's snoring softly, and Isaiah's pretty sure he can see drool dribbling down his chin. Isaiah breathes a quiet laugh and eases the door shut. He tiptoes into the bathroom and locks the door behind him.

Isaiah moves to stand in front of the sink and gives himself a good look in the mirror for the first time that day. Shit, does he look *rough*. His eyes are bloodshot and rimmed with dark circles, and his skin is dull and dry. But then he looks down at his neck and sees the hickey Nick left him last night. It's in an incredibly conspicuous spot, at the base of his neck but not low enough to be covered by a shirt collar. It's about the size of a quarter, already starting to turn purple, and just the sight of it has Isaiah's cheeks warming. He presses the pad of his thumb to it gently and lets out a satisfied sigh at the subtle ache.

More of Nick's words play back in his head.

You can't look at me like that.

Tell me you want me to kiss you.

Show me you can restrain yourself.

God, his voice. All low and rumbly and desperate, and that fucking accent. It's enough to have Isaiah firming up in his pants.

He pulls the lube from his pocket and sets it on the sink. He stares at it for a moment. There's really no better time than now to try it out. There's no guarantee that Isaiah will get any more extended alone time since Nick is always awake at the crack of dawn. And also, he just really wants to. He tears the plastic off the cap with his teeth and pops it open. He shoves off his shorts and the boxers he's just now realizing are not his. He picks up the bottle and squirts some lube onto his left hand, hoping that it won't make a difference that he's using the non-dominant one. He leans forward, resting an elbow against the sink, and reaches behind himself with a shocking amount of confidence.

Isaiah teases himself for a moment, circling his entrance with his fingertip until he's used to the sensation. He can't tell if he likes it or if he's just excited by the newness of it all, the anticipation of doing this with Nick. What it could lead to. He doesn't hate it, though, and that's enough for him to keep going. After a minute or so, he takes a deep breath and presses the very tip of his middle finger inside himself.

It's… strange. Not bad, exactly, but not really good, either. Just kind of… there. There's something in his ass that's not normally there.

"Hmm." He presses his finger in to the second knuckle, and still, it just feels like a finger in his ass. Is this supposed to get better? It must, right? Or else nobody would do this. He straightens and arches his

back slightly in the hopes of getting a better angle. He plunges his finger all the way in, and when it still just feels kind of weird, he tries wiggling it around. And-

"Fuck," he hisses as he hooks his finger and drags it across a spot that sends a sudden, white-hot jolt through him. He flinches hard, accidentally slamming his knee against the bathroom cabinet. "*Ah!"*

Isaiah yanks his finger out and tries to take a step back from the sink, but he forgets his shorts are still around his ankles and he falls straight on his bare ass.

"Ow," he groans, laying back and letting his eyes fall closed. Now his knee, his ass, *and* his hand hurt. He stays there for a moment, just wallowing in his own shame, until he hears Nick jiggling the doorknob frantically.

"Hey!" he barks from the other side of the door.

"Shit," Isaiah hisses, scrambling to pull his pants up.

Nick pounds on the door. "Isaiah, are you ok?"

"Fine!" Isaiah calls back, struggling to his feet. He snatches up the bottle of lube and chucks it carelessly into the cabinet below the sink.

"Let me in," Nick demands, fiddling with the knob again. Isaiah wipes his lube-y hand on his shirt and opens the door, trying his damnedest to look nonchalant. He looks like he's half asleep, and he's still ass naked. He squints at Isaiah. "What the hell are you doing? Why'd you lock me out?"

"Nothing," Isaiah says quickly.

Nick frowns, his gaze shooting around the bathroom. "Why are you being weird?"

"I'm not being weird," Isaiah says unconvincingly.

"Yes you are," Nick says. "Why did you lock the door?"

Isaiah shrugs. "God forbid a guy want some privacy when he's on the toilet."

"What, did you put a fuckin' bomb in it? What the hell was that crash?"

"I fell," Isaiah says. "I, um… Sat too long. My leg fell asleep and I fell when I got up."

Nick stares at Isaiah for a moment, scrutinizing his face. He lets out a displeased grumble. "I know you're lying, but I don't know *why* you're lying."

"I'm not-"

Isaiah is cut off by the sound of the cabinet creaking open, then a plastic bottle rolling across the floor. Something nudges his foot. He glances down and finds the lube, cap popped open, taunting him. *God fucking dammit.*

Nick bends down and picks it up. He reads the label, then looks up at Isaiah, a brow quirked in interest.

"I-er…" Isaiah splutters, and he grows hot from head to toe. He can't look Nick in the eye. "Um. I have to go get our laundry."

Isaiah scoots past Nick and practically sprints back to the laundry room, ignoring his cries of protest. When he arrives, it's still going, but he can't face Nick right now. So he hops up onto the dryer, exhales heavily, and waits.

Of course, he's not alone for five minutes before Nick comes barreling into the laundry room. He's wearing his standard issue red shorts, but they look shorter and tighter than they normally do, and a gray hoodie that he can barely move in. When Isaiah frowns at his outfit, Nick rolls his eyes.

"Well, you took all my clothes and I couldn't walk in here naked," Nick grumbles.

"Are those mine?" Isaiah asks, leaning in to get a better look at the sweatshirt, and yeah, it's his. It has his high school mascot, a bulldog, on the front. He hasn't seen it in forever. It must've been buried way at the bottom of his suitcase.

"Yes, do you really fit in this? I feel like I'm suffocating," Nick complains, pulling at the neck of the hoodie.

"I didn't before boot camp, but I might now," Isaiah muses.

"Why are you hiding in here?" Nick asks suddenly.

"I'm not hiding, I'm just waiting for the laundry to finish," Isaiah mumbles.

"Ok, well, it's still going, so you could come back," Nick points out. He reaches up to tug at the chain around his neck. Shit, he looks upset. "You locked yourself in the bathroom and now you're running away from me."

"I'm not running away, I just…" Isaiah's head falls back. He sighs. "It's embarrassing."

"We're way the fuck past being embarrassed around each other," Nick says. "Do you not remember what I looked like this morning?"

Isaiah lets out a sad laugh. "I remember," he mutters.

"Alright. So… fuckin' tell me what you're freaking out about," Nick says. He's very obviously uncomfortable. Jaw set, brows furrowed. Talking about feelings is definitely not Nick's strong suit. But he's trying anyway, and it's enough to make Isaiah spit it out.

"I was…fingeringmyself," Isaiah says, mumbling the last two words so quickly that they're barely intelligible.

"Huh?"

"Fingering myself," Isaiah groans. He hides his face in his hands. "I was fingering myself, okay? I've never tried it before and I wanted to see if I liked it."

"And did you?" Nick asks, suddenly looking much more comfortable with the conversation.

Isaiah lets his hands fall into his lap. "I don't even know. I flinched when I hit my, um, g spot or whatever, so I kneed the cabinet. Then I tripped over my pants and fell. Then you came barging in and killed the mood."

"God fuckin' forbid I'm concerned about you," Nick says, rolling his eyes. "Would you do it again though?"

Isaiah barks a laugh. "Sure, in a padded room."

"Or, you know, you could do it on a bed. Like a normal person," Nick suggests. He raises his eyebrows like he just had an epiphany. "Or *I* could do it. That's safer. Probably the safest option, actually."

"Safer," Isaiah repeats.

"Sure. I'm a trusted adult," Nick says. Isaiah wouldn't say *that*, but he's not about to argue. Whatever reasoning he has for wanting to do sex stuff with Isaiah is totally fine with him. "Why didn't you ask me in the first place?"

Isaiah frowns. "I dunno. I don't want you to get sick of having to teach me stuff, I guess. And I was worried I'd hate it."

Nick is quiet for a moment. He's frowning hard at Isaiah, clearly deep in thought, the chain choking his finger tip. Isaiah wants to get up and grab him, make him stop, but he's rooted to the spot. Terrified of whatever is about to come out of Nick's mouth.

"It's okay if you hate it," he says, which is not at all what Isaiah's expecting. "I won't be… I dunno, pissed off or whatever. I just wanna make you feel good. You know?"

Isaiah takes a deep breath and nods.

"I don't mind teaching you either," Nick says. He smirks. "I'm like a thesaurus of sexual knowledge. It'd be a crime not to share it. Plus, I love when I know more about something than you do."

Isaiah snorts. "I'm too shocked that you know the word thesaurus at all to even correct you."

Nick scoffs dramatically. "Okay asshole, maybe I'll keep my knowledge to myself. Have fun never having a hands-free orgasm—"

"You can make me do that?" Isaiah asks, eyes wide. He had no idea that was an option.

Nick gives a coy shrug. "You'll never know because you're an asshole."

"But don't you wanna make me feel good?" Isaiah asks, grinning at him. He bats his lashes. "Come on. Teach me."

"Jesus Christ," Nick grumbles, squeezing his eyes shut like he just looked directly into the sun. His cheeks are glowing pink and he's fighting back a smile. "I'm getting you some sunglasses."

"You could blindfold me," Isaiah teases. "Maybe tie me up."

"Alright," Nick says gruffly, running a hand over his hair, "I'm going back to the room before I have to walk by the front desk pervert with

a pants tent."

Isaiah's grin sharpens into a smirk. "Bye, Nick," he says, his voice low. "I like you in my shorts."

Nick grunts and scurries out of the room, leaving Isaiah laughing on the dryer.

He's still laughing when the dryer buzzes a minute later and nearly makes him jump out of his skin.

Chapter 6: Nauseous

Chapter Notes

boots may be cancelled but novacek lives on

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Slovacek

Nick thinks he probably should be neutered.

Clearly he can't stop thinking with his dick, *especially* once he has a couple sips of alcohol and a pair of big brown eyes pinned on him. Sometimes there isn't even alcohol in the equation, like not even ten minutes ago when he told Nash he'd finger him and had to waddle back to the room half hard. What the hell is wrong with him?

Hooking up with Nash to *"get it out of his system"* is obviously not working. It's only making everything worse. Thank god he's brutally hungover today, or else he would've been on Nash before they even got out of bed this morning and he'd be an even bigger disaster than he already is. His dull headache and sore back aren't enough to keep those urges completely at bay, though, as was just demonstrated in the laundry room.

Stupid. Nick never learns.

But he swears he won't do it again. For real this time.

The door of the cottage swings open and Nash wanders in, a pile of clothes in his arms. He looks tired today, but somehow he's still so fucking *cute*. It just makes Nick want to drag him to bed and hold him close and squeeze the shit out of him. Instead, Nick watches as Nash makes his way over to the bed, then deposits the warm laundry into Nick's lap and gives him a guilty (adorable) pout.

Ah, shit. He's gonna do it again.

"What? What the hell is that face for?" Nick asks. He straightens from where he's slumped back in bed and pulls a piece of clothing from the pile.

"I, um…" Nash says, rocking back and forth on his heels. "Well. You know I tried to do a load of laundry."

"Tried," Nick echoes, eyeing him warily. He shakes out whatever he's holding. It looks like one of his wife beaters, but *very* small. He blinks at it. "Is this *mine?"*

Nash winces. "Yes."

"How the hell did you get it this small?" Nick asks, getting out of bed. He took off Isaiah's too-tight sweatshirt as soon as he got back from the laundry room, so now he's just in his also too-tight, but slightly less so, shorts. He pulls on the *way*-too-tight tank top and looks at himself in the many mirrors. His jaw drops. It looks like a fucking sports bra.

"Nash. Seriously?"

Nash claps a hand over his mouth, clearly stifling a laugh. "What did I do?"

"What the fuck do you mean? You obviously shrunk it!" Nick exclaims, gesturing to the hem of the tank top that barely stretches over his pecs. He turns back to the pile and pulls out Nash's sweater vest. It's roughly toddler sized now. Honestly, it's kind of impressive how small he managed to get everything. "Did you wash these in the pits of hell? How fucking hot was the water?"

"That's why they're so small!?" Nash asks, grabbing the tiny sweater vest. He holds it up to himself and Nick can't help but laugh at how ridiculous it looks. It'd probably fit a toddler now. "Hot water shrinks stuff?"

"Yes!" Nick says. He digs a pair of little boxers out of the pile and flings them at Nash. "Always use cold. It's way better."

Nash blows out a breath. "Well. Now I know, I guess."

"Yeah, great, now *I* have no fucking clothes," Nick grumbles. He pulls off the tank top and tosses it back into Nash's laundry pile. He's not mad, but he is dreading the thought of wearing Nash's fancy, ill fitting clothes for the rest of the trip. He hates being uncomfortable.

"Sorry," Nash says sheepishly, and he does look genuinely apologetic as he wrings his hands together. "I'll replace them. Tomorrow. We can go to the mall—"

"Oh my god," Nick groans, scrubbing a hand over his face. "You're *actually* gonna dress me up like a doll."

"Would you rather I went alone and picked stuff out without you seeing it?" Nash asks, raising a brow at him. "I can get us matching sweater vests."

"Fucking Christ." He has a point, and Nick would rather put a gun in his mouth than wear a sweater vest. "Fine. We'll go to the stupid mall."

Nash beams at him, and Nick almost smiles back. *Almost.* He catches himself and schools his face into a stern frown. Nash cannot think he's excited about going to the fucking *mall.*

"So," Nick says, because he needs to change the subject and he can't let Nash believe he's off the hook, "You just decided to try fingering yourself unprompted?"

Nash opens his mouth to respond. After a pause, he closes it, then grimaces. "It, uh… It wasn't unprompted."

"Oh?" Nick asks, raising a brow at him. "So… what prompted it?"

"Um… I was talking to the front desk guy," Nash starts, and Nick's heart drops into his stomach.

"What do you mean?" he asks. Nash flinches at the ice in his tone.

"I wasn't flirting with him or anything," Nash says defensively, but that's not even really what Nick is worried about. Well, maybe it is a little, but it's moreseo the thought of Nash talking about his sexuality with some stranger that has Nick feeling tense. Nash flounders silently for a moment, clearly trying to gather his thoughts. Then, suddenly, he looks distressed.

"I just… I dunno. I needed someone to talk to about… *this*." He waves a vague hand. "I feel like I'm losing my fucking mind. And he asked. I didn't just go up and start dumping on him unprompted. He could see that I needed help and he figured out that we were hooking up on his own and he said he's discrete so I just started talking and I told him that I wanted to—"

"Ok, slow down," Nick says, tugging Nash to sit down on the edge of the bed with him. Nash looks over at him, those big brown eyes wide and bloodshot, a wrinkle between his brows. Fuck. Nick never intended for this to turn into *something.* He just wanted to tease Nash

about playing with his ass. Now, thanks to his own stupid mouth, his chest is tight and he wants to crawl out of his skin. "What do you mean you're losing your mind?"

Nash takes a deep, desperate breath. He stares at Nick, his gaze intense and searching. "What is this? What's happening between us?"

A deep pit opens up in Nick's stomach. His heart sinks even further. He almost tells Nash there is no *'us.'* That nothing is happening. But he can't. He can't lie to Nash, and he doesn't want to anyway. But he doesn't want to get his hopes up, either.

"There shouldn't be an *us,"* Nick says quietly.

"Yeah, but there fucking is, and I *need* to know if you feel the same way I do," Nash says, his voice shaky. His eyes are glassy and he looks like he's a strong breeze away from completely falling apart. It makes Nick feel fucking awful. "Please, Nick."

God. That hurts.

"Maybe I fucking do, but what difference does that make?" Nick asks, frowning at him. His chest is tight and his stomach feels sour. He doesn't want to talk about this. "We have less than a week left together."

"So let's make the most of it," Nash says, and there's a pleading edge to his voice that shatters Nick's heart. "If we're on the same page, let's stop dancing around each other. Why can't we just—"

"Because it's gonna fucking hurt like hell when it ends, Isaiah!" Nick cries, shocking himself with his outburst. He takes a deep breath and reaches up to fiddle with his cross. "I know you've never done this before, but I have. It's fucking torture when it ends. And it *will* end, because it has to. This can't go anywhere."

"You don't think I know that?" Nash implores. "I've been clinging onto every scrap of affection you'll give me because I know we're fucking doomed. I'm not stupid, Nick. I understand the stakes. I'm just trying to make the most of a shitty situation."

"I know you're not stupid." Nick exhales heavily, pressing his fingers against his eyelids until he sees colors. "This is just so fucking complicated."

"I didn't think you were one to back down from a challenge," Nash

says. He sounds disappointed. The nausea that was plaguing Nick this morning comes back tenfold.

Nick scoffs. "This isn't some stupid bet we made. This is our fucking lives, Nash. I'm trying to do the smart thing for once. I can fuck up my own life, but I won't bring you down with me."

"What was last night, then? Or, like, *all day* today? You've been flirting with me since you stopped puking. Why, all of the sudden, are you not into this anymore?" Nash asks, raising a brow at him. "I can't deal with these mixed signals. Either you're in or you're not."

Nick winces.

"It's not that I'm not into it. I am. *Too* fucking into it." He groans and hides his face in his hands. "I dunno, Nash."

"Talk to me, Nick. Please," Nash says quietly. "You owe me that much."

Nick sits up straight, his hands falling to rest on the bed on either side of his lap. He takes a deep breath. "I'm gonna sound fucking stupid."

"You're not," Nash assures him. "Just… Try. Please."

Nick gives a weak nod, his gaze trained on the floor. He takes a moment to try and gather his thoughts, but it's no use. They're zipping around in his brain, colliding with each other and bouncing around his skull. Eventually, he turns to look at Nash, and while it doesn't cure him the way it usually might, he feels the pressure ease from his chest and his thoughts soften a bit. Instead of pointy projectiles, they're rounded and rubbery. He doesn't know how to voice this to Nash without sounding like a complete idiot, but he tries anyway.

"You make all the bullshit in my brain feel… less," he explains with a vague hand wave. "It's like I get tunnel vision or something and you're all I can focus on. It feels good when you're looking at me."

Nash watches him for a moment, his chest heaving with slow, even breaths. His hands sit on his knees in tight fists, like it's taking everything in his power not to reach out for Nick.

"That's not stupid," Nash finally says.

Nick rolls his eyes. "It *is* stupid. I'm stupid. I have no goddamn self control. I *know* what the right thing to do is. I know that it was dumb to come on this road trip and to do what we did last night and to flirt

or whatever today. But I still did it all. I just can't help it when I'm with you. You make me do dumb shit, Nash."

Nash huffs and rolls his eyes. "Because you can't say no to me."

Nick shakes his head and takes another deep breath. "I don't *want* to say no to you."

Again, Nash studies him, a wrinkle between his brows and a thoughtful frown playing at his lips. Nick feels stripped bare, raw and aching. He's incredibly uncomfortable, jaw clenched and shoulders hunched, and he has to fight the urge to get up and storm off. To snap at Nash again and start a real fight so he can finally have the upper hand.

But, as difficult as it is to admit it, Nick cares about Nash. More than he's cared about another person in a long time. Definitely too much to risk completely fucking the whole thing up just for the sake of feeling in control. Maybe his feelings are obvious. They must be if the front desk pervert picked up on them without even seeing the two of them in the same room together. And that's not only completely humiliating, it's fucking terrifying, too.

"We can be careful," Nash says, his voice barely above a whisper. "We're already in too deep. It's gonna be miserable either way. We might as well let ourselves have this while we can, right? And I'm gonna write to you. Whether you respond or not, I'll write. I won't put anything incriminating in the letters, obviously. Or maybe I will and I'll sign them from… I dunno, Isabelle or something."

Nick gives a sad laugh. God, leaving him is gonna suck so fucking bad. "If we get caught…"

"We won't," Nash assures him, and Nick wants to believe him so desperately. "We won't be together at Lejeune. Nobody else knows we did this. How would we even get caught?"

Nick sighs and shakes his head. "You're supposed to be the responsible one."

"Yeah, well, I'm sick of it," Nash murmurs. "I want you, Nick. I don't wanna go back to pretending I don't."

"To be fair, you were doing a pretty shitty job of pretending you didn't," Nick points out, and Nash laughs.

"I just… I wanna know that I can touch you. In here, at least. I don't wanna have to wait until we're both drunk and too horny to stop ourselves. I want *you* to touch *me*. I want you to kiss me. Whenever you want to. Just because you feel like it. I dunno. Maybe it's stupid. I…" Nash sighs. His fingers twitch in his lap. "I want this to be easy since nothing else can be."

Nash makes it sound so simple. And maybe those eyes are breaking him down, but Nick is starting to think that maybe it *is* simple. They want each other. They understand each other. They're sleeping in a sex dungeon together. It'll feel good.

Nick scrubs a hand over his face. "Fine."

Nash snorts. "Don't sound so enthusiastic."

Nick turns to look at him. Nash's lips part as he sucks in a breath. He leans in slowly, carefully, until the tip of his nose brushes against Nick's. Nick doesn't pull away, just licks his lips and lets his eyes flutter closed.

"Have you brushed your teeth today?" Nash asks quietly, and Nick barks a loud laugh.

"Yes, asshole," Nick says. "Twice."

"You can kiss me, then," Nash says, and Nick sits back.

"Oh, *can* I?" Nick asks sarcastically, brows raised in disbelief. "Am I allowed to? Weren't you the one who was just—"

"Shut the fuck up," Nash laughs. "Just kiss me. Please."

So Nick does. Soft and sweet. It feels like the first time, but it kind of feels like the first time every time with Nash. Nick wonders if that'll change now that the dam has broken.

"How do you feel?" Nash asks as he pulls away from Nick. "Still hungover?"

"A little," Nick sighs. "My body fucking hurts."

Nash nods to the jacuzzi in the middle of the room that Nick nearly forgot about. He raises a brow. "Maybe you should take a bath."

"I like where your head is at, but honestly, the thought of my bare ass touching the bottom of that tub is making me a little nauseous right

now," Nick says, and Nash laughs.

"Alright, fair," Nash says. "How about a hot shower and a massage?"

"Oh, fuck yes," Nick groans.

"A real shower, though. Not like last night," Nash argues, and Nick rolls his eyes. "A real massage, too. No funny business."

"Oh my god," Nick grumbles, falling to lay back on the bed. "What are you, a fucking cop? Didn't you *just* say you wanted to be able to touch me all the time?"

"Ok, I didn't say *all* the time," Nash says indignantly. "Massage yourself, asshole."

"*You* massage yourself."

"Maybe I will!" Nash exclaims.

Nick smirks at him. "Can I watch this time?"

"Oh, fuck off," Nash says with an eye roll and a nudge to the knee.

They shower together again, and it isn't like the night before. They're both too exhausted and hungover for it to be anything more than what it needs to be. It's still nice, though, and Nick is surprised by how much he enjoys himself. They fall into bed after, Nick on his stomach and Nash on his side next to him, trailing his fingers lazily up and down Nick's bare back. It's no massage, which Nick will bitch about in the morning, but it's enough to put him to sleep after only five minutes.

"I don't like that you're spending so much money on me," Nick grumbles as Nash dumps an armload of clothes onto the register. They're in some department store against Nick's many adamant protests, and Nash has picked out enough clothes to last Nick the rest of the week and then some. Nice stuff, too. He makes Nick buy fancy underwear that doesn't come in a five pack for the first time in his life. Then, a pair of sweatpants that actually make Nick moan when he touches them because they're *that* fucking soft. And Nash keeps making him try stuff on, which he never normally does. Nick goes

through four pairs of jeans before Nash finally tells him to get the first pair he tried. Just when Nick thinks they're finally done, Nash insists on a sweatshirt because apparently, he needs one *just in case.* When Nick points out he'll have nowhere to store all this stuff, Nash simply says that he'll hold onto it for him.

"Well, I fucked up," Nash says as the cashier starts scanning their items. "I owe you."

"This is way more than you owe me," Nick says. "You shrank a handful of cheap underwear and a pair of sweatpants. This is… too much."

"Well," Nash gives Nick a playful smirk and lowers his voice, "I can think of a few ways that you can make it up to me."

"Jesus Christ," Nick groans, his cheeks flushing hot.

Nash has been doing it all day. Making passes at him in the middle of stores, hidden between clothing racks and display cases, whispering all sorts of filthy things to Nick under his breath. It's risky and incredibly frustrating, but Nick can't deny that it's also stupid hot.

"Can we be done after this?" Nick asks as the cashier starts bagging their haul.

"Yeah, you hungry? I could go for some dinner," Nash says, and Nick nods. He winces as the total pops up on the little register screen, but Nash just slides his card out of his wallet and hands it over without a second glance.

Nick sighs. "Yeah, I guess. We should probably stop at the grocery store on the way back."

"No, let's go out," Nash says. He accepts the bag from the cashier and elbows Nick playfully in the side. "So can wear your new clothes."

"I dunno, Nash, you just dropped almost a hundred bucks on me—"

"Oh, come on," Nash says, rolling his eyes. "I did it because I wanted to. Now I wanna go get barbecue and have a few too many beers and listen to live music. Are you gonna make me go alone?"

Nick lets out a resigned exhale. "No."

"Didn't think so," Nash grins, throwing a playful arm around Nick's shoulders as they walk out of the store together. Nick shoves him off,

making Nash let out a loud laugh.

Nick changes in the car on their way to dinner. Nash almost crashes twice, and Nick's not sure if that's because he's distracted by the view or because Nick keeps accidentally elbowing him in the ribs while struggling into his new jeans. When they get out of the car, Nash looks him over and nods appreciatively. He peels the size sticker off Nick's jeans and yanks the tag out of his t-shirt.

"You look good," Nash says. He hooks his finger under Nick's collar and pulls out his chain so it sits on top of the fabric. Instinctively, Nick reaches up to fiddle with it, but Nash grabs his hand to stop him before he can.

For a moment, Nick freezes. He stares at Nash, wide eyed and silent, until a teasing smile stretches across Nash's face and snaps him out of his stupor. Nick yanks his hand out of Nash's grip and looks frantically around the parking lot, but there's nobody there.

"Don't," he hisses, and Nash stifles a laugh. "Not here."

"You're so skittish," Nash teases.

"You're gonna get us fucking caught!"

Nash rolls his eyes. "By who? The seagulls? We're fine. Come on." He nods for Nick to follow.

"Fine, but no funny business in there," Nick says. "If you try and feel me up under the table, I'll pin your dick to your leg with my fork."

Nash barks a laugh at that. "Don't tempt me with a good time."

"Freak," Nick grumbles, but there's a small smile on his face as Nash holds the door to the restaurant open for him.

Nash mostly behaves himself at dinner, except for when he steals Nick's pickle from his plate and eats it in a way that can only be described as sinful. It's torturous, obviously, and Nick copes by pounding several $1 beers over the course of their short meal. Nash does too, because everything is a challenge between them and he refuses to let Nick call him a lightweight. But, truthfully, they're both lightweights now, so by the time they leave the restaurant, they're pink cheeked and giggling and bumping into each other as they wander the streets of Nashville to sober up.

Nash stops short in front of a business and Nick nearly bowls him over.

"We're going in here," Nash says, and before Nick can even look at the sign above the door, he's being dragged through by the wrist.

A bell tinkles as they enter and Nick is immediately hit with the overwhelming scent of old basement. He wrinkles his nose.

"What the—" Nick blinks as his eyes adjust to the dim light of the room he now occupies. It's small and stuffy. The walls are entirely covered in music memorabilia and a horrifying wax figure of what Nick can only assume is Elvis stands by a doorway that's shrouded with a velvet curtain. He looks kind of melted, almost like he's had a stroke and half of his face has gone numb or something. His jumpsuit is yellowing and dusty and his hair, for some reason, looks greasy. Just next to Lopsided Elvis is a front desk, which is staffed by a very bored looking teenage boy.

"What is this place?" Nick asks.

"The Nashville Hall of Fame," the boy says with forced enthusiasm. Then, he huffs and slumps back on his stool. "It's… it's just a wax museum of famous musicians."

Nick shudders, making direct eye contact with Lopsided Elvis. Well, as direct as he can, since one of Elvis's eyes is much lower than the other. "Christ. I'm not—"

"Yes you are," Nash says, and he drags Nick up to the desk and buys them a set of tickets. The boy at the front desk looks apologetic as he slides Nick his ticket, which Nick accepts with a grunt. Then, he finds himself being steered over to the curtained door.

"You're so fucking pushy today," Nick says as Nash manhandles him through. They come out the other side into a dim, quiet hallway. The curtain rustles as it falls shut behind them and plunges them into darkness.

"I think you like when I'm pushy," Nash says quietly from behind Nick. Like, right behind him. So close that Nick startles. But Nash rests a soothing hand on one shoulder and slides the other around to splay it flat over Nick's stomach. He presses against him softly and leans in so his lips just brush the curve of Nick's ear. "I think you like when I tell you what to do."

Nick swallows hard and squeezes his eyes shut. He feels sweat prickling over his skin and his heart is fucking racing. Nash isn't wrong, but Nick wishes he wasn't coming to that conclusion *here* of all places.

"Nash," he says firmly as he feels the heat of Nash's body pressing against his back. Then, just barely, teeth graze his earlobe. Nick sucks in a sharp breath. "We're in public."

"Nobody's here," Nash murmurs, and Nick feels him press a kiss to the sensitive spot just below his ear. Nick lets out a small, embarrassing noise that could possibly, maybe, *theoretically* be described as a whimper, even though it definitely isn't one.

"You don't know that," Nick says, his voice rough. He bites down on the inside of his cheek as Nash presses his hips against Nick's ass. He can feel that Nash is already a little hard, and now so is Nick. "Remember when you said you're way less horny than I am?"

"Mm. I lied." Nash's hand dips lower until he's teasing along the waistband of Nick's jeans.

"Jesus. *Nash*." Nick steps forward out of Nash's grasp and tugs at his chain. Nash sighs, a guilty little frown on his stupidly handsome face.

"Shit. Sorry. I'll stop."

Nick keeps a good deal of space between them for all of five minutes. But as they walk from room to room, observing increasingly abominable celebrity wax figures, it becomes obvious that they are, indeed, alone. Well, so long as you don't count the dozens of lifeless, lopsided eyes that seem to follow them as they move from exhibit to exhibit. Honestly, Nick is probably going to have nightmares that night. But, regardless, there are no other living patrons to this weird museum. So Nick lets himself drift back towards Nash. He lets their hands brush as they walk and their shoulders rest against each other when they pause to try and figure out who the fuck a wax figure is supposed to be.

Nick is in a staring contest with a figure that looks like a humanoid bulldog in a wig and a cowboy hat when Nash wanders away.

"I think it's supposed to be Willie Nelson," Nick says, mostly to himself, eyes narrowed. Nash doesn't respond. Nick leans in closer, but it doesn't make a difference. He could be nose to nose with the figure and still have no idea who it's actually meant to be.

From across the room, Nash calls, "Nick, come check this out."

Nick tears his eyes away from maybe-Willie's and finds Nash poking around outside an old photo booth.

"No," Nick says immediately. There's no way he can be trusted in a photo booth with Nash. Or, more accurately— there's no way *Nash* can be trusted in a photo booth with him, especially given the way he's been pawing at Nick all day.

"Oh, come on!" Nash whines. "Do the photo booth with me!"

"Absolutely not," Nick says.

"*Please*, Nick," he pleads, batting those fucking doe eyes.

Fuck.

Later, in the car back to the sex dungeon, Nick finds himself staring at the photo strip in his hand. He can feel himself blushing as he looks at it, but thankfully, the sun has set and the dim streetlights barely provide enough light for Nick to see the pictures at all. There's no way Nash will be able to tell.

The first photo is innocent. Nick is mean mugging the camera and Nash is grinning broadly next to him, an arm slung casually around his shoulders. They look good, Nick thinks. They look good *together*.

The second isn't too bad, either. It shows Nick glaring at a still grinning Nash while just out of frame, his hand creeps into Nick's lap and settles on the bulge in his pants. Nick balked at him when he did it, but he didn't make any move to stop him. Then, between camera flashes, Nash undid Nick's fly and slipped his hand inside his jeans while Nick babbled incoherently. Stilted, barely intelligible protests that they shouldn't, and that someone might see, but Nick knew nobody else was in that horror show of a museum. They were alone.

In the third photo, Nick is wide eyed and flushed hot pink, Nash watching him with heavy lidded eyes and his lower lip pulled between his teeth. Now, in the car, Nick's stomach flips as he remembers the way Nash grabbed his already half hard cock so confidently and started massaging in earnest.

The last is the most damning. Nick's head is thrown back, his neck stretched to expose the dark hickey he's sporting from the night before. His brows are knitted together, his jaw hanging open, and he's beet fucking red. Nash stares at him, his own cheeks flushed and eyes trained hungrily on Nick's throat.

Just after the camera flashed for the final time, Nash spat into his hand and brought Nick off right there in the booth. When Nick finished, Nash stole a dusty bandana from the pocket of one of the wax figures to clean up the mess.

"One look at this and everyone is gonna know we were doing gay shit in the photo booth," Nick muses, unable to tear his eyes away from the bottom picture.

"Just tell them you sneezed," Nash says nonchalantly. "Or, better yet, don't go around showing everyone that fucking photo."

"I don't look like that when I sneeze," Nick argues. "What if someone finds it by accident?"

"I can hold onto your copy—"

"No," Nick says too quickly. It's embarrassing, but he'd actually rather die than give up the little photo strip, even if he knows Nash would keep it safe. He clears his throat. "Uh, no. I'll just hide it. I'll get a fucking bible or something to keep it in. Nobody will look in there."

"You're gonna buy a bible to keep your gay public handjob photo strip in?" Nash laughs.

"Of course not," Nick says, rolling his eyes. "I'll steal one."

"Not very godly of you," Nash teases.

"Were you under the impression that *I'm* a godly man?"

"Maybe not," Nash says. "But I think I'll need to see you on your knees to really be sure."

"Jesus fucking Christ," Nick says, his whole body heating. He glances over at Nash, relaxed in the driver's seat, a playful smile on his face. "I think we should stay in tonight."

Nash beams at him. It's quick. Only an instant before he turns back to the road, but it's so bright and disarming that Nick can't look away

from him for the rest of the ride back to their room.

Chapter End Notes

> good lord this chapter kicked my ass. i was not planning on having them have this conversation yet but it just kind of happened because these characters have a mind of their own apparently and now i have to adjust the trajectory of the rest of the series lol BUT i am happy with where it ended up so its not the end of the world

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!